Even the Strongest

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Summary

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"Of course." Vegeta said, his heart breaking at the sight, if he had ever had one - sometimes, he wasn't so sure. "Anything."

Kakarot was strong. Resilient. Always keeping a smile on his face like nothing ever phased him. So for him to be like this, Vegeta couldn't even begin to imagine just how much he must be suffering right now.

Goku's lips trembled in response, his eyes searching Vegeta, wanting to believe him with every single part of his being. Wanting to trust him, but afraid of being judged. For a long time, he said nothing. And then, finally, what he just barely managed to choke out destroyed Vegeta from his very core.

"I think I was raped…"
...

In which Goku has just been traumatized in one of the worst ways imaginable and Vegeta is left to pick up the pieces.

VENT FIC. TRIGGER WARNINGS for Rape, Self-harm and Suicidal Ideation.

VegeKaka. Some OOC because of drug and trauma reasons.

Reaching Out

Story: Even The Strongest, Chapter 1

Disclaimer: I don't own Dragon Ball.

Graphic descriptions of some things so be very cautious.

Trigger warnings: for rape, self harm, disordered eating and some other mental health related stuff.

Clarifying that this story is based heavily off my personal experience with Autism and I went through something almost identical to what Goku has in this.

So anything that seems slightly out of character is(drugs and trauma aside) because I'm improvising with that some. Thanks for understanding.

...

All Vegeta knew that day was that something was off when Goku appeared before him in the gravity chamber, looking disheveled, his hair and clothes messier than usual. He was unbalanced, like he was on the verge of falling.

"Kakarot, it's you. So, did you come here to train, or what?" He had found himself asking, pretending not to notice it. He had just finished up a training session of his own in the gravity chamber and was sweating, wiping the sweat off his brow.

"Um... Actually... No... Maybe we could do that some other time... For now, I..." Goku's voice was groggy as he scratched the back of his head. He giggled, swaying a bit, as if he was having trouble keeping his balance. "You mind if I rest here for a while? I'm not really feeling all that well right now."

"Not feeling well?" Vegeta raised an eyebrow, completely thrown off. "Why? Are you sick or something?"

"Yeah, sorta..." Goku stumbled past him towards the wall, as if he were having trouble keeping his balance. "So can I?"

"What, in here? You've got to be joking! Absolutely not. Go and lay down in one of the guest rooms! This area isn't for sleeping in." Vegeta scolded, slight irritation welling up inside of him.

Despite Vegeta's words, Goku ignored him, and did exactly what he told him *not* to, slumping down on the floor.

"Kakarot, did you even *hear* me...? I told you-"

"I know... Just give me a bit." Goku replied weakly, but made no attempt to do anything.

Sighing, Vegeta walked over and kneeled down in front of him. "Come on, get back up. "I'm taking you somewhere else."

"Hey-" He started to reach out and place his hands around the man's waist to help lift him, but came to an abrupt halt when Goku suddenly *flinched* , a sound akin to a small whimper escaping his mouth. The other Saiyan pulled in on himself.

Vegeta's breath hitched, an icy chill running down his spine.

He desperately wanted to believe he had just imagined it, but when he saw that Goku was trembling, recognizing his body language, he knew he hadn't.

"Huh?" Goku's eyes darted around nervously from side to side. While he did meet Vegeta's gaze briefly, it seemed more like he was trying to process his surroundings, process the owner of the hands on his body, and deduce what his intentions were.

And it was then that Vegeta knew.

Something was *wrong* .

Goku was *afraid* . And more anxious than Vegeta had ever *seen* him before.

But *why* ?

Was it because of *him...* ?

Maybe not, but even so...

"I... I'm... not going to hurt you." Vegeta retracted his hands and holding them up to show him that he meant no harm. "See? I just want to know what's going on with you."

Goku looked at his hands with uncertainty before seeming to calm down some in response.

After a moment, he then started dancing his fingers around on the floor in what Vegeta could only assume was an attempt to stimulate his hands.

Vegeta knew fully well about Goku's *tics* and how he'd fidget with his hands when he was nervous, but he had never seen him get like *this* before.

It scared him. He had to do *something* .

Say something.

Let him know that I'm not his enemy.

"Kakarot..." He began again, managing to soften his tone ever so slightly. He swallowed, forcing back every ounce of pride he held within him to ask the question. "What's with you today? This isn't... like you."

"It... It's... nothing. You just... startled me, is all... I'm fine." Goku denied, but Vegeta could tell that he was lying. He was way too tense.

"...Alright-" He cut himself off. It was only then that Vegeta had finally began to piece everything together.

Goku's claim that he wasn't feeling well.

His slurred speech.

His inability to stand properly.

How tired he seemed.

And his strange behavior in general.

There's no way .

He wouldn't...!

"Have you... *taken* something?" Vegeta could feel his heart pounding in his chest.

No response.

"*Answer* me, *have you taken something* ?" He unintentionally rose his voice, startling the man.

"Oh-uh, sorta...?" Goku admitted after a moment, looking anywhere but into Vegeta's eyes. "...I mean... I did... take something this morning, but I don't really know what all it was..."

With Vegeta's suspicions confirmed, he felt a hole forming in the pit of his stomach. *How does he not even know what he took? Of all the-*

"Listen, I'm going to call an ambulance. I want you to stay right here. I'll be back in a minute."

He didn't have any senzu beans on him and if it was an overdose of medication then he wasn't even sure the beans could help with that. The safest option was to have somebody come to check on his vitals and give an idea if he was okay or if medical intervention was necessary. He didn't want to bring him to an actual hospital unless he had to.

"No... Don't... I already told you... I just need to rest for a while... I'm tired." Goku insisted, barely audible. If he were feeling normal, he'd have probably went back to Chichi's place, but the fact that he hadn't was a clear sign they had probably had another falling out again, something that had been happening frequently nowadays.

But there was more to it than that, and Vegeta knew he needed to get to the bottom of it.

"Alright," He said. "But if I get even the slightest suspicion that you're about to throw up or pass out, or *anything* , then I *will* take you to a hospital. Is that clear...?"

"Mhm..." Goku meekly nodded, gazing down as he walked his fingers across the surface of the floor.

Vegeta sighed. "Hey, would you.. like to come back and sleep in my room? Until you're feeling better, that is. Surely it'd be more preferable to laying on the floor."

It was a simple offer, seeing as Goku had shown no interest in the mention of the guest rooms. What he didn't expect, however, was for Goku to visibly tense up as the words left his mouth.

"No..." Goku's voice cracked.

"Well, will you at least tell me why you went and doped yourself up on drugs?" Vegeta asked.

"It's nothing... You don't need to worry about me. I'm fine... " Goku repeated the same lie once more, letting his bangs cover his face.

But Vegeta knew fully well that he *wasn't* . *None* of this was.

It was frustrating that Goku wasn't giving him any real answers.

"Like hell you are. You can hardly even look at me right now..." He reached out and gently cupped Goku's face with his hand in hopes of getting him to meet his gaze once again. All of a sudden, Goku winced slightly, completely stunning Vegeta.

It was the physical contact.

But why?

After all they had been through over these past few months, it stung more than Vegeta wanted to admit that Goku, *of all people* , was rejecting his touch for some unknown reason.

It was true that he could deal without it, but...

*Why is he suddenly so **afraid** of me...?*

What have **I** *done?*

Maybe I've scared or upset him somehow without even realizing *it...?*

But if that was true, then why is he here?

*If he didn't want to be here then he'd have **left** by now.*

So then... is it something else?

It must be...

*But **what** ?*

Out of nowhere, Goku's shoulders began shaking. He sniffled.

"Kakarot..." Vegeta was speechless for a moment, trying to process it. "Are you... crying? What's wrong...?"

Despite all of their bantering, Vegeta cared deeply for Goku, he couldn't stand to see him hurting like this. If consoling him meant breaking out of his prideful shell to do so, then he would *do exactly that* without hesitation.

Goku didn't speak, stifled sobs escaping from his lips one after another.

Vegeta could tell he was trying his best to stop it but suffering even more as a result. He panicked, moving closer, just barely refraining from touching his face.

"Talk to me." He wanted more than *anything* to wipe those tears away, but only if Goku would allow him to.

"Vegeta... I..." Goku finally choked out, his voice trembling as he looked back up to meet his gaze with tear-filled eyes. "There's something I need to tell you..."

"Of course." Vegeta said, his heart breaking at the sight, if he had ever had one - sometimes, he wasn't so sure. "Anything..."

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"I think I was raped..."

At first, Vegeta just sat there, stunned by the words that had come out of Goku's mouth, staring at him in pure, utter silence. He wasn't even breathing.

At first, he wanted to deny what he had heard, and tell himself that it was some sick joke, it *had* to be, but, as he saw the pain in Goku's eyes, Vegeta's shocked expression gradually morphed into one of sympathy.

Tears formed in his eyes at the realization as to the reasoning behind Goku's fear.

"Kakarot... I... I'm sorry... I didn't realize..." Dark memories from his own past flashed before him all over again, plaguing his mind.

"I didn't want to say anything..." Goku said. "I was ashamed... and when you touched me like that, I was afraid... that you might do the same thing he did..."

"*No*, *of course not*... I would *never* hurt you like that. I know it may not seem like it, but I *do care* about you..." *So much more than that.* "Hey, come here..."

He invited him into his arms, an embrace which Goku slowly accepted this time, sobs wracking his body as he hugged against him tightly - so *securely.*

It was a hug that only another Saiyan could withstand without getting crushed. Vegeta didn't mind, of course. He loved his strength.

And it wasn't just his strength. Against his better judgment, somehow or another, Vegeta had long since developed *feelings* for the man he had deemed to be his *rival* .

But, right now, what Goku needed was a *friend*, and that's what Vegeta was determined to *be* for him as long as it took to help him through this. Telling him how he felt could wait.

He watched with relief as Goku slowly calmed down bit by bit. After a while, Vegeta pulled back, once again wiping the tears from Goku's eyes.

"Now.. I want you to tell me everything. No holding back. Deal?" Vegeta met his gaze, hoping that Goku would trust him.

Goku seemed to pause, clearly afraid to talk about it, but slowly, he nodded. "Okay..."

He looked down in silence for a moment, probably considering his words.

"So... yesterday, there was this... argument... that me and Chichi got into... She said something... that really *bothered* me." Goku began drumming his fingers on the ground, an intense look in his eyes as he stared at the floor in front of him. "It started out peacefully enough. She started saying how proud she was of Gohan, and all the high hopes his teachers have for him... How happy she was for him... And looking back now, I probably should have just kept my mouth shut, but all I did was ask if I could train with him and Goten for a while... She told me no... You know how she gets over that stuff... As soon as I mention sparring, she automatically assumes I'm gonna put them in danger again. She refused to even listen to what I had to say. I guess I kinda got angry after that because she kept yelling at me, so I said some stuff I shouldn't have. That she was being too controlling, that she had no right to make that decision for them... That it was their choice. And that's when she said... If I liked training in the otherworld so much... Then I... should have just *stayed* there."

A sickening silence settled between them as Vegeta allowed Goku to take the time he needed.

He was fully aware that Goku and Chichi hadn't been getting along very well lately and had even recently gotten divorced because the arguments had gotten out of hand for either one of them, especially for Goku who didn't deal well with those kinds of conflicts, But this was new. For the woman to even *suggest* such a thing was going way too far, even for *her* . Even if she didn't mean it or was just too upset to realize what she was implying.

Why does he continue to live with somebody who doesn't respect him, who treats *him that way...?*

Sure, Bulma and himself had also broken off *their* marriage, but at least it was on good terms. After all, he couldn't say they were always fighting. It just... hadn't worked out in the end. Partly because of *himself* admittedly.

Actually... *mostly* because of him.

Vegeta looked away a bit.

"When I woke up this morning, I was still pretty upset about what she said to me, so I went out to do some training. But the more I thought about it, I started to wonder if maybe she was right about me, after all... That I should just..." Goku paused for a moment, looking downcast.

The mere thought that he had actually been considering it scared Vegeta more than he ever thought possible. He had already lost him once before, he refused to go through that again, especially now.

"The woman was wrong, Kakarot... *ignore* her. Your children *need* you." He insisted, before meeting his gaze. "*I* need you..."

After all the time they had spent getting to know one another. Goku wasn't just his best friend. He was so much *more* .

Together, they were two of the only full blooded Saiyans left alive in the universe, so they shared a certain connection because of that, But Goku was the opposite of Vegeta. He was of a pure heart. He didn't fight to kill. He fought for the simple joy of the battle and facing strong opponents and improving himself, taking on every challenge with a smile.

Above that, he was kind and gentle hearted.

He had an energy about him that people couldn't *help* but be drawn to.

A smile that people who knew and cared about him wanted to keep away from the harsh realities of the universe.

An innocence that people wanted to *protect.*

Vegeta was no exception to this.

But it wasn't just that.

The truth was Goku *completed* him. He made him a better person. And as things were now, he couldn't *imagine* his life without him.

"Vegeta..." Goku was speechless for a moment before looking down at Vegeta's hand that was firmly gripping his. A nervous expression appeared on his face, but he seemed to relax a bit after a moment.

"...The man who... hurt you... Is this when he approached you?" Vegeta asked, not wanting to derail the conversation.

Goku nodded. "Yeah... It... happened a bit later, though. I kinda got overheated from from the sun, so I needed to lay down for a while. I was feeling sick at the time, like I was gonna throw up. That's when he came over and asked if I was okay... He said he was a nice guy, and told me..." Goku reached up and started rubbing at his arm, clearly trying to fight against his nerves. "that I could come over and rest at his place if I wanted to since he lived right down the road. He did seem nice enough, so I... I can't believe I *trusted* him. I feel like a complete idiot right now.."

His voice trembled with self-hatred, the nails of his other hand digging harshly into his skin, which was starting to become raw and red at this point, blood trickling out of the wounds.

"No... this wasn't your fault... I-" Vegeta cut himself off. "Hey, stop that, you're bleeding. Give me your arm..."

Unable to stomach watching it any further, he gently pried Goku's hand away from the wound, bringing the injured arm closer to himself. He began to dab the liquid away with his fingers, staining the white fabric of his glove.

Goku tensed up when Vegeta did this, but after a moment, he appeared to calm down, presumably wanting to trust Vegeta's hands.

All the while, Vegeta was slowly forming a picture in his head based on the information that Goku had told him so far.

Not only was he suicidal due to the argument he had had with the woman, but he was also physically ill when that man approached him...

Goku was known to have a trusting nature about him, one that made him want to give everybody the benefit of the doubt. He didn't always pick up on things that other people would have. Some social cues, even double meaning words. Goku was just completely oblivious to them. He took things literally, at face value.

It was true that Vegeta had openly mocked him for being so naive before, but down deep, he could never hate him or truly look down on him for it. Even if a part of him used to resent him for that - for sparing him as though he were some helpless *child* - that kindness was the only reason he himself, Vegeta, was still alive.

He acknowledged that. But still... there were so many sick, ***sick*** individuals who would see that in him and be more than ready to prey on that pure nature of his.

Vegeta briefly bit his lip, frowning a bit. Anger towards the person who did this to him started rising to the surface. "Did he mention his name...?"

"Yeah, he called himself Allan... I actually have a paper he gave me with his name and number on it, if you want to see it." Goku said with a moment of hesitation as he pulled out some folded up paper from inside of his obi and handed it to him. Vegeta took it, his hands shaking as he unfolded the paper and skimmed over the sloppy handwriting. He then looked back up at him to urge him to continue.

"Since I didn't really want to go back to Chichi's place, I decided to go with him... I mentioned that I had had an argument with my ex wife and what she said to me. He asked me if I had 'gone and got myself fucked up'? I don't know, I think he thought I was on drugs because he also wanted to know if I did pot... I told him no, I don't mess with those things... It wasn't long after that that we arrived at his place... And he..." Goku seemed to be nervous about continuing.

"It's alright. Take your time." Vegeta encouraged.

"He made me a sandwich and some soda. Since I hadn't eaten in a while, I thought it might be a good idea to get something on my stomach, so I did. That's when... he handed me some pills and told me to take them... seven, I think it was. One had a really strange design on it... I asked him what they were, and he said something about one of them being a muscle relaxer? I don't know. He told me that they would help me feel better. I thought they were for my stomach or something, so I didn't really think too much of it and decided to take them. About twenty minutes later I started to feel kinda weird." Goku trailed off into silence for a moment as Vegeta began to understand it now.

So that's why he didn't know what he had taken earlier. He probably had no idea that's what that man was planning... The bastard ***drugged*** *him so he would be more* ***suggestible*** *.*

Vegeta clenched his jaw, barely able to contain his rage and disgust. He forced himself to say nothing, giving Goku the opportunity to continue on his own time.

"He offered me a pipe, pot I think, and he told me to take a puff. I didn't really want to, but he insisted I do it, so I decided to go along with it... I guess I felt like I had nothing else to lose... just to try it, and see what it was like... but I couldn't stand it... It felt like my lungs were on fire... I immediately tried to hand it back to him... but he told me that I was supposed to take a deeper puff. I wondered if he was right, maybe I hadn't done it right. So I tried it again, but that made it even worse, I could hardly even breath. He took the pipe and gave me the drink from earlier that I hadn't finished. He was laughing. I think I may have a bit too, but it was more out of nerves than anything else... After that, he pulled me into his arms, and I... My memories... they're really fuzzy, but I think that's when he started... taking off my clothes and..." Goku pulled his hand out of Vegeta's grasp and started clawing at his arm yet again in a desperate attempt to calm himself down. He didn't finish his sentence and Vegeta could tell he wasn't going to.

Vegeta's face morphed into one of sympathy as he understood now. "That's when he... *raped* you... Isn't it...?"

Tears fell from Goku's eyes at the question more choked sobs escaping his lips. His legs had started moving around, rubbing against each other as he tried to calm himself down. "I *told* him, '*I don't think I feel comfortable with this. I don't think I want to do this*.' *I* ***told*** him that over and over again... But he ignored me, he just kept telling me to relax, to stop struggling... I... I was afraid... And my body... I just... I *froze up*, like a *coward*..."

Vegeta could only imagine how much he was hurting because just *seeing* him like this hurt.

...It wasn't something that was even a ***thought*** *in his mind. What kind of person would...*

Sure... Goku could be completely clueless sometimes, even when something was right in front of him. But he never harbored ill will towards *anybody*.

He didn't deserve to go *through* something like this.

Biting back his own tears, Vegeta leaned in towards Goku, his expression fierce as he wiped the hair and tears away from the man's eyes, caressing his face.

"Alright. You're going to tell me *everything*, ***right now***... His location, what the bastard looks like... Because I am going to find him," he growled through a choked up voice, his tone filled with nothing but malice. "and I will *destroy* him. He won't even *think* of touching anyone ever again. As your ***Prince***. I will make him *pay* for what he did to you.″

"No, please... Don't hurt him... It's my fault this happened..." Goku weakly argued, before looking down.

"What? No, don't you *dare* think this was your fault. How could you even *say* that...?" Vegeta felt a lump forming in his throat at hearing Goku blame himself over this.

"It's just... Maybe I led him on somehow... or didn't use proper communication... Sometimes, I misread people's intentions and send out the wrong messages because of that... When he started... pushing himself on me, I..." Goku's voice trembled as he stared painfully into Vegeta's eyes. "Was telling him I wasn't comfortable with it not good enough...? I just... don't get it... What I did do wrong...?"

"You didn't do *anything* wrong... What you said was *more than enough* to make it obvious that you wanted him to stop. And he should have already known that, but it's apparent he was just thinking with his *dick* instead." He spat the expletive with revulsion.

"He told me... I must have felt something because I... I was... erect when it happened..." Shame passed over his face. He was humiliated. "But I don't understand. Why would I have been turned on? I didn't want to do that with him, I was afraid of him, and yet... I couldn't even stop my own *body* from reacting... That's not normal..."

"Yes, it is." Vegeta struggled to speak. Look at me. You can't... You can't always decide how your body responds to something like that, it just... *happens*..."

"Looking back now, I probably could have just used my instant transmission to get away, but I wasn't really thinking about it, I was afraid to... Who could I even go to when all that was

happening...? Not only that, but... he took pictures of me, and I didn't want them getting out... So... I felt like doing what he said just would make everything go by faster... I feel so *disgusting* right now..." Goku's nails were now covered in blood much to the chagrin of Vegeta.

"I know..." Vegeta replied grimly. "But the things he did... and made you do... you're not even a *part* of that, you hear...? That man was an animal. He *violated* you. He took advantage of your trust and *raped* you. He even *drugged* you, so you wouldn't be able to fight back. *That's* what a coward does... *He's* what's disgusting. Not *you*... So... You can't... blame yourself..."

Vegeta had never felt more useless in his life than he did right now. He wanted more than anything for him to understand this wasn't his fault.

"Still... Any *normal* person would have *never* been that trusting... Or that... that *compliant*..." Goku emphasized it with self-hatred. "You all were right about me... I drop my guard too easily... I'm too nice... And as a result, I get hurt because of it. If I weren't... like this, then none of that would have happened..."

A pang of guilt struck Vegeta to his very core as soon as that was said. That's when he was given a harsh reminder of something that not many people really thought about, something that even he himself failed to take into account multiple times. Even if Goku didn't always say much about it, he did listen to what other people said about him. He heard every word.

But the only reason Vegeta ever said those things was to protect him.

From people like Frieza.

From people like ***that man***.

The one that had hurt Kakarot.

*Not once did I think **badly** of him for that. I just didn't want him to get himself **killed** ...*

"You're *wrong*..." Vegeta swallowed, before moving forward and softly holding a hand on Goku's chest. Goku's heart was pounding a mile a minute. "Many others... have been through the same thing as you have. It does *not* make you weak... And your kindness... What you have is a *gift*... A gift that *saves* people... It even saved *me*, in fact... But... in this world, in this universe, there are *people,* like that man... Ones who will take advantage of that..."

"...I guess it's true that he took me off guard, but still... when it comes to... sex, and romance... I don't really understand those those things the way others do, I *never* have..." Goku said with a downcast look. "Does that mean there's something wrong with me...?"

That was the second time Goku had asked if something was wrong with him. Vegeta couldn't stand hearing him talk about himself this way.

"No... Not to *me*, there's not..." Vegeta stated in a soft voice, moving his hand up to run his fingers through Goku's hair in a gentle, caring motion, as he rested the other over Goku's arm where the wound was. "There are things even *I* don't understand. About relationships. About intimacy. But that doesn't make you unworthy of it - or weak... You're just different... Like I am. That's *all*. So don't ever let *anyone* tell you any less. *Especially* yourself... Besides... Those kinds of things... They're not supposed to be painful... Sex should *never* be used as a weapon to *hurt* or *control* a

person. What was done to you... *That's* what was wrong. And you can't allow him to get away with that..."

"...But... what if nobody believes me...? If I... report him, I mean... They're liable to think I'm lying..." he said reluctantly. It was an understandable concern. Many victims went through this same thought process. It's why so many chose not to report in the end.

"They *won't*. I'll even testify as a witness for you if I have to." Vegeta said firmly. Sure, he couldn't say that he was there when it happened, but he *could* testify as the person who Goku came to, how he could tell that he had been drugged, and even as to his character as whole.

If Vegeta had his way, he would just say to hell with the laws and slaughter the bastard without a second thought. That's what he had in mind.

But, unfortunately for him, that wasn't how Goku operated, and Vegeta knew that.

"...Still... what proof do I even have that he raped me? Or *anything*, for that matter...?" Goku was starting to panic. Vegeta refused to let him.

"Just be *honest*. If this really *just* happened this morning as you say it did, then there's a high chance that his DNA is still... inside of you..." It took all the willpower he had to finish that sentence. "Didn't you also say he took photos of you?"

A pause.

"...Mhm."

"...Then **tell** them that. Tell them ***everything***." Vegeta grabbed his shoulders with an intense gaze. It was unrelated to DNA, but could still prove useful in backing up his case. "Every single thing that sick bastard said and did to you. Everything he *made* you do... Don't even *think* of holding a *single detail back.* You hear*?*"

"I..." Goku looked into his eyes for a moment as if contemplating what he was saying. He started to look down with an expression of doubt - He was afraid.

"You don't need to worry." His hand came up to touch Goku's cheek, his fingers lovingly brushing against the skin of his jaw. He touched Goku's forehead to his own. "... I'll be right here with you. You won't have to go through this alone."

He had no ulterior motives with this, and Goku seemed to understand.

He relaxed some but was still on edge. "I don't want to see his *face* again."

Hearing those words tore Vegeta to pieces, but he forced himself to stay strong.

"I know... I can only imagine how scared you must be right now..." he struggled to speak. "But this is the *only way* to ensure that that man faces legal ramifications for what he did to you... To be able to stop him from doing the same thing to another. Don't you *want* that? Tell me, Kakarot." Vegeta pled for a response.

After a long moment of silence, Goku finally started to say with a thought-filled look on his face. "I guess I could talk to Krillin about it... He is a cop, after all... but..."

"What is it?" Vegeta asked, getting the feeling Goku wanted to say something.

"You will..." Goku looked away sheepishly, the faintest blush on his cheeks. "come with me, right...?"

For a moment, Vegeta was completely stunned by the sight, feeling his own face heat up.

Seeing Kakarot so... *sh*y. His *blush*. It was *adorable*.

*No, now isn't the **time** ...!*

Vegeta quickly forced himself to regain his composure, refocusing on the matter at hand almost immediately.

"Of *course*..." He said with a small smile, as he wrapped an arm around his neck, briefly resting his chin on top of Goku's head. "As long as you need me to be there, I *will*."

"Thank you so much, Vegeta..." Goku appeared to have a small boost of energy after that. Ever so slowly, he reached up and returned the embrace. "For everything... For listening to me... It really means a lot..."

Vegeta stared up at Goku, his eyes soft and full of understanding.

"You don't need to thank me, Kakarot..., I'm just glad you told me something." He said, before he moved back, starting to get up. After asking if the other could stand, be pulled him up by his hand. "Now..., why don't we go talk to the bald one? I'm sure he'd have no problem filing a report for you. Can you stand?"

"Yeah." Goku said as he stood up in spite of how wobbly he felt. He then turned his head away.

Vegeta could tell he was still having second thoughts.

"Look at me..." he cupped his cheek, making him face him. "You can do this. I believe in you. But first you must believe in yourself. Do you understand me?"

Goku sheepishly nodded after a second.

"Good." Vegeta smiled, holding onto his arm. "I want you to use your instant transmission to take us there."

"Alright... I'm still nervous about all this, but I'm going to trust you." Goku said, offering a small hesitant smile. After a few seconds, he did as asked, appearing before the police station with Vegeta by his side.

...

This is still not how I want it to be but it seems better to me than before and I will continue to edit on it.

The Report

Story: Even the Strongest, Chapter 2

Disclaimer: I don't own Dragon Ball

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Goku had never felt more *humiliated* in his life than he did that day. The memories plagued him, eating away at his mind like some parasite. His body had been *violated* and yet the voices told him it was all his fault, that he wasn't actually a victim.

Just knowing that he wouldn't have had to go through that if he hadn't followed that man to his place. If he just fought back, or *did **something***. *He had even allowed himself to be drugged because he was **too stupid** to realize it*. He could have defended himself, but he just *froze up like some coward*. His body had reacted against his will, *betraying his mind*.

When he told Vegeta what happened, Goku had expected to be blamed and called spineless for letting it happen to him. But Vegeta didn't do that. He didn't blame him once for *any* of it. He told him *repeatedly* that it wasn't his fault, and if not for *him*, Goku wouldn't be at the police station right now.

Telling Vegeta about it had taken every bit of courage he had, but now he had to tell *Krillin* as well? He didn't want to do this. He didn't even want to *think* about it.

No , all Goku *wanted to do right now* was *leave* , and he probably *would* have without a second thought if not for the fact that Vegeta was there with him.

His eyes darted around the room, feeling as though he had suddenly become privy to every possible sound in the room. The clicking of pens, doors opening and closing and even people typing on keyboards. He was quickly starting to become overstimulated.

There's too much noise in here, I can hardly think right now. I've got to calm down. I've got to-

It wasn't every day he got like this, as he could usually calm himself down pretty easily when he did, but there were times that this sort of thing just *happened* , mostly when he was stressed out about something.

He suddenly jumped a bit when he felt a hand grabbed his. He quickly looked down to see that it was just Vegeta's. Before he could react or say anything a voice caught his attention.

"So what's up, Goku? You said you needed to talk to me about something?"

Goku looked up to see Krillin standing in front of him with an inquisitive look on his face as he briefly glanced between him and Vegeta.

"Yeah, sorry, it's um... kinda personal... Could we maybe go somewhere quieter?" Goku asked, nervously scratching the back of his head.

"Hmm, you know... I *do* have a break in about thirty minutes from now, so if you don't mind waiting, then maybe we could-" He started to say, having completely misunderstood Goku's intentions due to the simple fact that he said it was 'personal'.

"No, that's not what I meant." Goku cut him off before averting his gaze. "There's something I need to report..."

"Oh." Krillin uttered in response to the clarification. For Vegeta to be here with Goku like this, he could only imagine it must be over something pretty serious. "Well, sure. But I might have to have one of my buddies come with me. You don't mind, do you?"

"Your buddy?" Goku inquired. He didn't want to talk about this in front of some stranger. He needed to know what he was getting himself into and familiarize himself with faces before he said or did *anything* .

Krillin could sense his hesitation, and his grin grew wider.

"Don't worry, Goku. He's nice. I'll even introduce you to him first. Stay here, okay? I'll be right back." Krillin said, before walking over to a group of cops that were whispering to one another about something.

Goku immediately started to wonder if he could still go through with this. After all, *anybody* could say they were nice. It didn't make it true. He had learned that the hard way. Plus, a mere *acquaintance* didn't *know* him the same way that Vegeta and Krillin did.

There's no way I can go through with this-

Vegeta, recognizing the look on Goku's face, tightened his hold on him before he could leave.

"Listen to me, Kakarot..." He whispered. "I know that you're nervous right now, but *running away from this won't solve* ***anything...*** You need to *stay strong* and trust Krillin to *handle* this situation. Do you understand...?"

Upon hearing Vegeta's words to him, Goku looked away with uncertainty. "Mhm..."

Vegeta sighed, not able to stand seeing him this nervous. He needed to do *something* , even if it wasn't *a lot* .

"Hey ... " He reached up, stroking Goku's face and brushing aside some of his hair. A lump formed in his throat when Goku recoiled. "I *promise* that all of this is going to *work out...* "

It took a moment for Goku to tell himself that it was only Vegeta touching him and not *that man* , but slowly he began to relax some.

Vegeta's hand was comforting to him, almost like a safe haven. It helped Goku feel secure and *ground* him in a way that just drumming his fingers *hadn't* .

He momentarily closed his eyes, allowing himself to breathe.

"Yeah, you're right..." he finally said, placing a hand over the one resting on his face. He reopened his eyes. "I can do this. I've just got to believe in myself. Thanks, Vegeta..."

Vegeta blushed a bit in response, before teasingly pinching his cheek and averting his gaze. "Don't mention it. As long as you understand, that's the only thing that matters..."

Krillin returned not even a moment later with a tall man who had long black hair tied back into a ponytail. He almost looked like a giant when standing next to Krillin.

"Guys, meet Flanders." He said, approaching them. "Flanders, this is my best friend, Son Goku, and that over there is Vegeta. Don't worry, he may look scary, but he's not *too bad* once you get to know him."

Vegeta scoffed at Krillin's jab towards him, choosing not to say anything.

"It's nice to meet you two." The man offered a hand for them to shake.

"Likewise." Vegeta muttered in a snarky tone, reluctantly obliging. To be fair, he had never been particularly polite to just *anybody* , so it wasn't that surprising and fortunately Flanders didn't seem to take any offense by it.

When Flanders reached out to Goku, however, Goku froze up for a moment.

"Son? Do you mind if I shake your hand?" Flanders looked at him inquisitively. Goku was cautious for a moment before deciding to do as asked.

"Oh, uh... okay." He smiled, returning the gesture as he remembered that this was a member of law enforcement. It was only right that he should at least *try* to be polite. Chichi would have probably scolded him if he didn't. "It's a pleasure for you to... er I mean for me to make your acquaintance, sir."

Vegeta found his attempt at politeness laughable at best, Goku was so awkward when it came to upholding social etiquette. Not that he could really blame him.

Personally, he himself had no *desire* to be polite to *anybody,* unless they were somebody like Whis or Beerus that could easily destroy him without even *trying* .

"Hey, you don't need to be so formal around me, man. I may be a cop but just between you and me, I'm not like some of the other guys." Flanders smiled, seeming pretty chill so far. "Anyways, now that introductions are out of the way, what do you say we take them to one of the interview rooms now, Krillin?"

"Good idea." Krillin agreed, smiling, before leading Goku and Vegeta to a room in the back.

Once Goku and Vegeta had sat down at the table, Krillin held out a couple bottles of water to them. "Would either of you like some water?"

"Sure, I *am* pretty thirsty right now. I haven't drank anything since this morning." Goku admitted as he took the bottle. Before he could open it however, Vegeta stopped him, grabbing it from him.

"Just wait, Kakarot. Not yet." Vegeta said, putting both of the bottles on the table.

"Huh? Why *not* ?" Goku looked over at him, confused.

"Because," Vegeta pulled him closer to whisper into his ear only loud enough that Goku could hear him. "If you by any chance happened to swap spit with that *man* earlier, it would be best if you hold

on so they can properly swab your mouth for his DNA."

"Oh, I guess don't think of that." Goku admitted, feeling a bit guilty. "Sorry..."

"You don't need to apologize. I just want to make sure this works out for you..." Vegeta sighed, placing a hand on his back.

"So if you don't mind me asking what was it you needed to report, Goku? Did something happen?" Krillin asked, a bit concerned.

For a long moment, Goku was quiet, fidgeting with the fabric of his gi. Finally, after what felt like hours, he spoke, but it didn't last long.

"...Somebody... he..." He tried his best to form the words, starting to lose his resolve as he felt Flander's eyes on him.

Vegeta could sense his hesitation and decided to at least take some sort of initiative.

"Kakarot has been *hurt,* Krillin..." He said with a pained voice. "*Badly*..."

Krillin's eyes widened a bit.

"Hold on, do you mean... somebody *assaulted* him? Like physically? Or..." He started to ask, a sinking feeling immediately forming in the pit of his stomach. He had been working as a cop long enough to know the kind of implications that could come with a statement like that.

And to narrow it down, neither Goku or Vegeta would have bothered coming here over a random street thug that picked a fight with them. This had to be something else entirely, and he didn't really want to imagine *what* .

"...I was... *raped* ... Just this morning..." Goku's voice was strained, as tears welled up in his eyes. He couldn't even look at him.

For a moment, Krillin was speechless, the gravity of the situation taking some time to sink in.

"Goku... I'm so sorry..." He said at last, unable to even *fathom* what he must be going through and how much courage it had to have taken him to come forth about something like this.

"We came here to report the sick bastard that did it to him." Vegeta explained in a low growl when Goku didn't respond.

"Yeah, of course, we'll get right to it." Krillin said organizing some of his papers, trying his best to hold back his own tears. He had to do his job, he couldn't let his emotions cloud his judgment right now.

Just take down the police report .

"Goku... I know this might be hard to talk about, so... would you mind if I started by asking you some questions first, instead?" He inquired.

"I guess I could do that..." Goku said with hesitation.

"Did you... know this person?" Krillin asked, as Flanders began writing something on a clipboard.

"No, I had never met him before..." Goku answered, once again trying to fight off the urge to leave.

"Did he ever say what his name was?" Krillin wanted to know.

"It was Allan, there was a paper he gave me earlier with his name and phone number. Vegeta has it..." Goku told him. "I can also show you where he lives if you need me to."

"Here." Vegeta said, handing over the paper he had been holding onto since earlier. Krillin took a glance at it before handing it to Flanders.

He turned back to look at Goku. "You said this happened this morning, right? Can you give us an idea of the time you came in contact with him?"

"..." Goku had closed his eyes, starting to dose off, clearly due to the side effects of the medication.

"Kakarot." Vegeta had to shake him slightly.

"Oh, uh... Time? I'm guessing it was somewhere around 11? I'm not sure..." Goku slurred. "It went on for about four hours..."

Four Hours?! If Krillin weren't on duty right now, he'd be visibly fuming. What kind of person would *do* that to somebody?

Vegeta wasn't any happier at hearing this.

The bastard. The filthy animal-

His shoulders were trembling. The fact that the man kept him there for so long... it was the perfect recipe for a person to be permanently destroyed on an emotional level. And he had. Nothing was off-limits to that monster - not even his dignity.

"Can you give me a brief description of the events leading up to this, and after? You don't have to go into all the details right now if you don't want to." Krillin encouraged him.

Goku paused before doing as asked, his leg starting to bounce. He began to tell him a shortened version of what had happened. *Shortened as it may have been, however*, Krillin still found it hard to contain the rage that was building up within him. Goku was one of the kindest and most lovable guys you could ever meet, so the thought that somebody he cared so much about had went through something like that... It felt like a stab to the gut in one of the worst ways possible.

He almost started to tear up, but he had to force himself to remain professional and get his job done. He *had to,* for *Goku's sake* .

When Goku got to the point where the man had penetrated him, he immediately started to shut down, covering his face in his hands. He couldn't bring himself to continue.

"Kakarot, *please...* I know this may seem difficult but you *have to do this*. You *must* ." Vegeta said, softly moving his hand up his back, to his shoulder. "You *cannot* give that man the opportunity to continue *hurting* ***others.*** "

Vegeta knew he had said that multiple times, but he was desperate for this situation to be taken care of.

"Vegeta, I *can't*... I..." Goku started shaking, sobs escaping his lips as he felt pressure from every person in the room to continue talking. His shoulders shook, and when he started clawing into his arm, all Vegeta could think to do was separate hand from his arm and pull him into a hug for another time that day. He didn't *care* if Krillin was watching, or *anybody* else for that matter. All he wanted to do right now was *support Kakarot* .

"Yes, you *can* . Stop *doubting yourself..."* Vegeta said, as he gently ran his fingers through Goku's hair. "It's *alright* ... I told you... I will be right here with you. I am *not* going to leave your side... Not for a moment ."

Although it was something similar to what he had said earlier, Vegeta would still say it *again* , no however many times he *had* to as long as it got the point across.

Goku flinched at first, but, after a moment, the pain inside of him began to die down as Vegeta held him in his arms. The other Saiyan's embrace was soothing in a way he never expected it to be, and somewhere deep down, he almost wished they could stay like that forever, if only to distract himself from even a *little* bit of the noise inside of his head right now, but he couldn't bring himself to say that out loud.

Goku slowly calmed down, his tears coming to a halt as he could finally *breathe* again. His leg was no longer bouncing, although he did start playing with the fabric of his gi.

He finally continued, telling Krillin everything he had told Vegeta.

Krillin listened in silence and watched, a bit surprised as Vegeta continued to hold onto him. He would have never expected to see *him* of all people acting so openly caring, but he couldn't be more grateful that Goku had found the anchor he needed right now.

"If you don't mind me asking, how did you get away from there...?" Krillin finally asked.

Goku took a second to respond.

"Well, he wouldn't let me go at first... I tried to, but he kept pushing me back down on the bed and saying he needed to *cum* first... So... I finally told him I'd come back later... I figured it was the only way he would... let me leave without pressuring me to stay even longer. That's when he gave me his number..."

"I see..." Krillin noted, writing something down on his clipboard. "So is that when you came to Vegeta...?"

"Yeah, shortly after that... I was still under the influence of the drugs that guy gave me, so Vegeta noticed it. He asked if I had taken something. He seemed really worried about me, so in the end, I decided to tell him what had happened..." Goku explained.

Krillin smiled softly. "I want you to know that it was very brave of you to come to both him and us, Goku..."

Goku tuned him out, disagreeing. He hadn't been brave, he had been a *coward*. But he couldn't say that, not in front of Krillin.

"Vegeta, since you came here with him, I'm going to need you to tell me about your side of the story." Krillin said. "Like how long was it until you noticed something was off with him? Was it

immediately? Or did it take a while? And how? What were the *signs* that tipped you off?"

Vegeta drew in a breath, thinking back to the events leading up to the revelation. Even thinking back to it still pained him greatly.

"It took a moment for me to realize it. But when he approached me, he seemed to be having some trouble standing and was acting strangely. He said wasn't feeling well..."

...

Vegeta told him everything he knew, and everything he had seen.

He talked about Goku's odd behavior, how his movements and coordination were off, his delayed responses, etc. He even mentioned Goku's aversion to physical contact, that he had never seen him like that before. As Krillin and Flanders listened, they continued to write, taking note of all the important details he had to offer.

Once Vegeta had finished talking, Krillin gave a small smile.

"Thank you, Vegeta..." He said. "That should be all the questions we have for now. You've been a huge help to both me and Goku."

"Tch. I'm only doing what seems right..." Vegeta muttered. The very *idea* of the bastard who did this to Kakarot getting away scotch free sickened him.

"Still... It's only because of you that Goku chose to come here, and for that, I couldn't be more grateful to you than I am right now... I really owe you one. Anyways..." Krillin then looked back towards Goku. "Goku, I imagine you'll probably be hearing back from one of our detectives some time later this evening, so I want you to be prepared for that. But for now, I'm going to have to ask that you to head to the hospital for a rape kit. Can you do that?"

"Krillin, you know I *hate* hospitals..." Goku immediately looked up at him, wanting to protest.

"Hey, try not to worry so much. You'll be in and out before you even realize it." Krillin said, and yet... he knew that wasn't entirely true. After all, these processes could take up to more than several hours. "Besides, you'll have Vegeta there with you. I'm sure you'll be just fine..."

Vegeta didn't say anything but watched Goku from the side, waiting to hear his decision.

In the end, Goku decided he didn't really have any other choice in matter, not if this was a requirement to convict the man who had raped him.

"...Okay, if this is really the only way, then I'll do it. Thank you, Krillin... You too, Vegeta... I guess I'll go there now." Goku said, as he stood up and headed to the door, followed by Flanders, who had finally finished his report, respectfully making his leave.

As Vegeta and Krillin stood up, Krillin quickly pulled Vegeta to the side by his arm, before he could leave the room. "Vegeta, before you go, there's actually something I need to talk to you about first."

"What is it?" Vegeta asked, a bit irritated by the contact to his arm.

"It's... about something Goku said earlier, that's kind of had me worried..." Krillin hesitated for a moment, before continuing. "He mentioned... that he had been having thoughts of suicide before all of that happened... I know he's died before and all, but still... If it can be helped, I'd really rather him stay here on earth, with all of *us.* Just... Try to keep an eye on him for me, will you...?"

Vegeta's heart dropped in his chest as he was abruptly reminded of something that he had pushed to the back of his mind to deal with the overlying problem of Goku's sexual assault. He pulled his arm away and turned on his heel, his back facing Krillin.

"You don't need to worry... He isn't going to do something like that. At least... Not if *I* have anything to say about it, he won't..."

Krillin wanted to believe him, but at the end of the day, they both knew Goku was the type of person who did what he wanted to. He gazed away, a pained look in his eyes.

"Maybe so, but..." He struggled to find the words. "After everything that just happened to him, Goku is going to need as much support as he can get. This kind of thing... It doesn't just *go away*..."

Vegeta clenched his fists. "Believe me, I *know."*

There was a pause from both ends, before Vegeta spoke back up.

"Do you know what he said to me earlier...?"

Krillin looked back up, to see Vegeta's shoulders shaking.

Vegeta was crying. *Again* .

"He tried to tell me that it was *his fault* this happened. That *he* was the one to blame for it... I couldn't even touch his *face* earlier because he was *afraid* that *I* would do the *same thing* to him as that *monster* did... Damn it... Kakarot is *innocent*. He had *no idea that's what that man was planning*. *He had* ***no idea***... And when it *did* happen, he even ***told him that he wasn't comfortable with it***, but that ***animal****, he wouldn't even* ***listen*** *to him...*"

Vegeta clenched his fists, his anger and desperation almost reaching its peak glaring at the floor. Tears blurred his vision. "If I *ever* see the face of the bastard who did this to him, I *swear that I'm going to* ***kill*** *him with my* ***bear hands*** *..."*

Krillin's eyes widened when he heard those words, only then realizing what Vegeta was going through, and just how much he *cared* about Goku.

"Vegeta-" He started to speak, but before he could say anything, Vegeta had already left the room, closing the door behind him.

In the end, he couldn't bring himself to go after him, because, even though he was a cop and his job was to put criminals behind bars, the truth was he felt the same as Vegeta did right now.

If he had a choice in the matter, he'd *rather* kill the man for what he had done to his best friend, for *hurting* him like that. In his eyes, the world would be a better place without scum like him, who existed for no other reason than to cause pain.

...

"Vegeta, what's a rape kit...?"

"Huh...?" The question caught Vegeta off guard, as he looked up at Goku, who seemed confused. They were now sitting in the waiting room of the hospital. Goku had been extremely quiet for a really long time, and Vegeta understood why now.

"A *rape kit*. That's what Krillin and everybody else is calling it, right? So is it, like, some sort of *medical treatment* or something? I mean..." Goku mused, cupping a finger around his chin. "Couldn't that have just been done with a senzu bean? I'm confused... Why would I need to go to a hospital for that?"

"Because it's not... for medical treatment..., Kakarot..." Vegeta looked down, rubbing a hand through his hair awkwardly.

"It's *not* ? Then what is it?" Goku looked at him with curious eyes. Vegeta felt his heart pounding in his chest, as he tried to come up with a way to put it into words without scaring him too much. *Why do* I *have to be the one to explain this...?*

"It is... a *test* they will run, to determine if any of his fluid or DNA was..." He swallowed as he thought about it, his voice trembling at the idea. "was *left behind* . If he did what you say he did... then they will find evidence of it, on your body..."

"Oh, I see..." Goku pondered it for a moment, before he spoke back up. "So how do they do one? A rape kit, I mean..."

"Well, how it's done is... by taking blood samples..." Vegeta swallowed. "And... swabbing your *insides* ..."

"Hold on, do you mean they have to stick things *inside of me?!* " Goku hissed, his resolve wavering. The idea of doctors and nurses poking and prodding at his body terrified him.

"Shh... *Keep your voice down..."* Vegeta lightly scolded him, noticing they were suddenly receiving stares from the patients inside of him. He immediately sent them all death glares, which caused them to turn their heads away.

He finally looked back to meet Goku's gaze, his eyes *desperate* for him to cooperate.

"And yes... That is how the procedure works, but look at me... This is *the only way to prove that he is the culprit* . Do you not wish to give that... *monster*... what he *deserves* ?"

Vegeta's voice was quiet. He was trying to be delicate - trying his best to ensure that his words were the right ones, but in his mind - he felt *helpless* right now. He didn't know how he could possibly make this process any less traumatizing than it already had been or *would* be.

"I'm *scared* , Vegeta..." Goku admitted, his eyes shimmering with unshed tears. "I don't want anybody else touching my *body* like that, *not again* ..."

At hearing those words, Vegeta wanted to break down all over again, but, as much as it hurt, he *had to force himself to keep it together* . For Kakarot.

"I *know*... I'm not going to lie and tell you this is going to be easy, because it *won't* . Even so..." Vegeta glanced down for a moment and bit his lip before looking back up at him, caressing his

face. "You're *strong, Kakarot...* Stronger than *I* am. That's why I *know* you can get through this..."

Goku was silent for a moment, doubting himself.

"And also..." Vegeta looked down, blushing a bit. "Once all of this is over... If it will help you feel any better... We could even go somewhere to eat, like a buffet or something... How does that sound...?"

It wasn't really like he was asking him on a date or anything. Rather, all he wanted right now was to give him another reason to push through this. He had nothing better to offer him at the moment and just *knowing* that made him feel completely *useless* right now. Still, he had to *try* .

"You would do that...?" Goku asked, surprised by the invitation. He awkwardly turned his attention to playing with his hands. He never expected to be asked by *Vegeta* of all people to go *anywhere* with him. "I thought you *hated* going out places..."

"I didn't say I was against it *all the time* ..." Vegeta muttered, scoffing. It was true that he didn't really deal well with social situations or people in general, but thanks to Bulma, he had found numerous restaurants that he could at least tolerate because the food was *just that good*. And if helping Kakarot right now meant putting his pride aside to make such an offer, then he would *do* it.

Goku gazed back up at him, silent for a moment when he realized Vegeta was serious about this and was trying to console him in his own way. The offer made him genuinely happy, happier than he'd been *all day* .

"Well... If you're really okay with it, then sure..." He scratched the back of his head and turned away awkwardly smiling. He felt his own face heat up as he spoke. "I'd *love* to go with you... I *am* pretty hungry right now..."

"Good... Now that that's settled, you may feel free to use that as motivation to get through this, Kakarot... " Vegeta's face got even redder before he turned to give him an intense look. He pointed a finger at him. "But if you even *think* of backing out on this again, you'll be *hearing it from* ***me***, *got it*?"

Despite how harsh his words may have sounded, they weren't from ill intent or anger. He was genuinely trying to press him to get through this, in his own way.

"Don't worry, I won't..." Goku grinned nervously.

Vegeta opened his mouth to speak again when a voice cut him off.

"Son Goku?"

It was a nurse, he was standing at the door, holding a clipboard and waiting for a response.

"That's me." Goku said, as he stood up and approached him, as Vegeta wordlessly followed behind him.

Despite how anxious he was about all this, he told himself he *had* to do this.

If not for *himself,* then for any other potential victims that his rapist had hurt, or would *continue* to hurt.

...

A/N: So in the end I decided to continue this, if only to shed light on the whole process and give people an idea of what happens. All though some of my memories from the day that happened are kind of foggy, I'm trying to reimagine it as if I were Goku with Dragon Ball as well as giving slow build up for my VegeKaka stuff. I personally didn't have a Vegeta in my life though, rather I had to primarily go through this process on my own(fortunately I thought to get an audio recording of what was happening to me to nab him), so I know if I can do this, all of you deserve to heard as well, your feelings matter and you are NOT to blame. So if any of you ever ends up in a situation like I did, please report it, you deserve to be heard!

It's been over a year now(2021) since it happened to me, and only now (in 2023) am I FINALLY getting a trial. I'm nervous, and anxious that I'll have to see his face again, but I'm trying to press through this scary process. I wish my love and support to anybody else going through something similar. Stay strong, all of you.

Trust

Story: Even The Strongest, Chapter 3

Disclaimer: I don't own Dragon Ball

This process dragged on much longer than I remember, but I can't remember much of it, so I had to re-enact it the best I could.

ALSO: Looking back now, I'm not sure if they did a anoscopy or a colposcopy on me during my rape kit (may have done both). all I know was I was in such intense pain that I actually had them stop mid way through. It was enough to get photos, but for sake of story Goku pushed through with it thanks to Vegeta.

…

The first thing the nurse did after leading Goku to his room was introduce himself as Evra, then started to ask a series of questions.

Vegeta was sitting in a chair beside Goku's hospital bed, wordlessly listening in on their conversation. He had his arms folded and was leaning back somewhat with his legs crossed.

The first questions Goku was asked varied as per the usual, ranging from his name, his weight, and his medical record as a whole.

There was one question in particular that caught Vegeta's attention after which he glanced at Goku.

Nurses were required to ask it every time a patient came to the hospital.

"Are you having any thoughts of hurting yourself or others?"

Goku paused at hearing it, taking a longer time to respond than he should have.

Vegeta studied him, guessing the reason for his hesitation. He knew fully well that Goku had not only been considering suicide but he had also witnessed him scratching into his own arm to the point it caused him to bleed. Sure, the scratching had clearly been an attempt at stimulating himself and calming himself down enough to talk about what happened, but that didn't mean Vegeta liked it, even if he understood *why* .

"Son?" Evra had to call out after not receiving an answer.

"Oh, sorry… No, I'm not." Goku finally spoke back up, having at least some knowledge on the way these hospitals worked. If he actually said anything about the way he actually felt, they'd just try to keep him here longer, and that was the last thing he wanted right now.

Vegeta wasn't even surprised by his answer. He let out a breath he didn't know he had been holding in. For now, he chose not to address it. He was far more concerned about the overlying matter of Goku's assaulter.

Evra didn't question Goku's delayed response. He continued on, and began asking into the details of what had happened. "In your own words, can you give me a brief description of what happened?"

"...There was this guy, he gave me some pills, said they would help me feel better. I wasn't feeling well. But the drugs made me feel worse, like drowsy and sick. He started doing things and forcing himself on me even though I kept telling him I didn't think I was comfortable with it. He... penetrated me, multiple times, I don't know how many."

"Are you in any pain?"

"...Mainly my backside. My jaws hurt some too."

Evra didn't question Goku's delayed response. He continued on, and began asking into the details of what had happened.

From there, Evra wanted to know things like which parts of Goku's body came into contact with what to get a better idea of exactly what they were working with.

"Have you showered since the assault?" Evra asked.

"No." Goku shook his head.

Evra typed something on his computer. "Have you drank anything since then?"

"No. I mean I started to, but Vegeta stopped me." Goku explained.

"That was good thinking of him." Evra noted, before asking more questions, all of which Goku answered to the best of his ability, despite not remembering or knowing certain things.

There was also some questions on optional shots and other things that Goku wasn't really responsive on or just said no because he didn't want to deal with it.

After a bit of time had passed, Evra seemed to have all the answers he needed and proceeded to take Goku's vitals and temperature.

Some time later, Goku was asked to give a urine sample, before a sexual assault advocate from helpline named Falman briefly came in and introduced himself, offering to stay with him during the examination process. Goku quickly declined as he didn't want more people in the room than necessary, especially since he already had Vegeta with him. Falman didn't seem bothered by this and said that he would be more than happy to wait and get back up with him later.

Soon Evra came back in and started preparing materials to draw blood. The problem with Goku was -

"No way, I *hate* needles!"

It was simple enough saying he wouldn't leave, but if there was anything Goku was absolutely terrified of, it was *needles* . Sure, maybe it *was* irrational, but Goku didn't care. There was just something about the tiny pointy metal object that sent him wanting to run away every single time. Yet another reason he actively avoided hospitals.

"Sir, you've got to try work with us. We can't do this if you *'re flailing around.* " The nurse was starting to become impatient.

Goku immediately started to jump off the hospital bed, refusing to let the nurse take hold of his arm. He glared at the nurse then at the needle, panic still on his face.

"Hey, try to calm down! You need to be still, and let them draw your blood…" Vegeta reached out, grabbing Goku's hand to pull him back down. He hugged against him and attempted to restrain him, to keep him from hurting the nurses, if not himself.

"No, I *won't* . I told them no needles and that's final!" Goku retorted, accidentally hitting him in the face while trying to push him off.

"Damn it, Kakarot! I know you don't like it, but you have to do this... *Please*..." Vegeta bit back his irritation at just how *stubborn* he was being. Before now, a part of him had always found Goku's Trypanophobia amusing. After all, a Saiyan as strong as *Kakarot* , who had faced adversaries from across the universe, including *Frieza* , afraid of a *tiny needle* ? It was just *jarring* .

But right now Vegeta didn't have the heart to joke about it or find humor in the situation as it was. He could imagine how frightening this process must be for Goku.

"Just think about the *food* ! Remember the buffet I promised you?" He sputtered out of no where without even thinking about it, desperate to find anything that might convince him to listen. "It's the *best in the city* ! Doesn't that sound good?"

Gah, what the hell am I even ***saying*** *?! There's no* **way** *this is going to work…! I'm just making a fool of myself by talking to him this way…!*

Surprisingly enough, however, Goku seemed to relax some and looked over at Vegeta when he heard that, as if seriously considering his words this time.

"The best in the city…?" His voice was strained and his question was forced out, the needle in the corner of his eye haunting him and causing him to whimper and pull back some but not keep fighting him like he had been.

Vegeta was genuinely surprised by this turn of events.

Wait, was enticing him with food… really the answer, after all*?*

Well, *whatever the case, he seems like he's finally calmed down some.*

He gave a small sigh of relief. "Yes, *that's right*… The food there is *unbeatable*. You won't be disappointed."

Evra once again reached out and tied a rubber band around his upper arm. The nurse probed around Goku's antecubital fossa for a good vein, before sanitizing the area and getting the needle prepared to stick him.

Goku bit his lip, looking away.

"I'm scared." He finally said, as he saw the tip come close to his skin in the corner of his vision. He winced when he felt a prick in his arm, but fortunately he didn't fight back this time.

"Don't *worry* , it will be over in a minute... That's it…" Vegeta said in as soft of a voice as he could manage.

"Now you're just *patronizing* me." Goku pouted, covering his face with his free hand. He was unable to fight off his embarrassment. "I'm a fully grown man who's afraid of *needles*. Where's the honor in that…?"

"Well, if it helps you feel any better, just remember that *I'm* afraid of worms… Always *have* been, ever since I was a child…" Vegeta mumbled, blushing a bit.

"Oh yeah, I guess I forgot." Goku recalled with a grin. "You do get pretty freaked out every time you see them. It's hilarious."

"Hey! I can't help it. They're *disgusting* …" Vegeta retorted, defensively. He appeared to be sulking yet was flustered at the same time.

Goku giggled in response, almost having completely forgotten about the needle in his arm until it was pulled out again at which he winced.

Finally having all the tubes filled, Evra left a bandage on Goku's arm to catch the blood that was oozing out of the wound.

Evra then came back in and held out a hospital gown for Goku to take. "For the examination, we're going to have to ask that you change into this. Your underwear need to come off as well."

"Okay." Goku said, taking it from him. Evra then left the room, giving him the space to change.

Goku gazed down at the gown in his hands before meeting Vegeta's eyes. He quickly turned his face away, feeling ashamed and even a little paranoid without intending to be.

"If you don't mind… I would prefer it if you didn't look at me while I'm changing…" He said, a downcast look on his face. While the request was personal to him, his voice was low. He was trying his best to avoid sounding rude.

Goku had never been a modest person when it came to his body, and it wasn't even like Vegeta *hadn't* seen him naked before, But, right now, the very idea of undressing in front of him *terrified* him for some reason.

He was *filthy* , he had been *defiled*. And he was not only ashamed of his body, but more than that. He didn't want Vegeta or anybody else looking at him in the same way as his rapist had.

Down deep, he wanted to believe his fears weren't rational, as Vegeta would *never* want to do something like that to him, and yet… it didn't stop the overwhelming anxiety he was feeling. Because he could never know for sure. He couldn't trust *anybody* right now. He was *afraid* to.

Upon hearing Goku's request, Vegeta's eyes widened a bit in response. He looked away, a pain-filled expression on his face. He had had no intention of watching him change. He believed in giving people personal space and privacy when they needed it. He wouldn't intentionally do something to make him feel uncomfortable like that.

On a few occasions he had even *scolded* him before for having no sense of decency to cover himself on a while they were in the Hyperbolic Time Chamber together.

And yet… To see somebody like *Kakarot* who was once so *carefree* and *laid back* ***this broken and untrusting…***

Untrusting towards *him* even.

It hurt Vegeta in a way that he couldn't even express with words alone.

"You don't need to worry." He mumbled in a soft voice without judgment. "I hadn't *planned* on it…"

…

Once Goku was done changing into the gown they had given him, he threw his old clothes at the end of the bed and sat back down.

"Alright. I'm done." Goku said, giving Vegeta the cue to turn back around. "Can't say I'm too happy to be in one of these again, though. They aren't very comfortable."

"I thought you liked looser-fit stuff." Vegeta scoffed a bit.

"Yeah, but there's something about the material that just bothers me." Goku explained, stretching his arms around. "It's all rough and itchy. I'd prefer something softer."

Certain fabrics didn't work well for Goku. He needed them to be a specific way or he couldn't function properly in them.

Vegeta was about to say something but stopped himself when Evra came back into the room, alongside another nurse who had a name tag labeled Alistair.

"Son, would you give us permission to take your clothes in for evidence?" Alistair asked, reaching out towards his shoes and holding a plastic bag, presumably for collecting his clothes into.

"You want my gi?" Goku looked a bit upset by the request, pulling back his clothes towards himself, not entirely seeming ready to part with it. "But this is one of my favorite outfits."

The nurse frowned a bit at his response and Vegeta immediately moved towards Goku, deciding to intervene. He gently placed a hand on his shoulder, not surprised when Goku flinched again.

"Kakarot, please, just listen to what the nurse is *telling* you. Any bit of evidence we have is *vital* right now." He said in a low but firm voice, glad when Goku at least *looked* at him. "And besides, do you honestly wish to continue wearing those after what happened to you in them…?"

"No, but…" Goku still seemed reluctant to part with it.

"Look, if it's really that important to you, then we'll just have Whis make you a new one." Vegeta insisted. "A *better* one."

Unfortunately, he knew all too well that Goku's clothes weren't even *half* of the problem right now. This entire experience was unfamiliar to him.

"...Okay, if you say so…" Goku said, with hesitation, before doing as asked, letting go of his clothes. Alistair took them, putting them into the bag. Vegeta sat back down once more.

After that, Evra asked for a hair sample from Goku, who complied and allowed him to brush a comb through his hair. They also swabbed his mouth for DNA.

Soon, the nurses then asked to swab the lining of his butt, which was uncomfortable enough for him since he was sore there due to tearing. Even though he had his gown to cover a large portion of the view it didn't make him feel any better about this, he still felt exposed, and he hated it.

The next part of the exam, however, was the hardest by far, and one of the most difficult things Goku had ever had to endure in his entire *life* . Doctors and nurses not only had to take pictures of where he had been penetrated, but they also had to stick a speculum inside of him for an anoscopy to get evidence of any damage done and fluid the man might have left behind.

The nurses kept asking him to relax his legs, but Goku didn't *want* to relax, he *couldn't* . He screamed from the agony, feeling as though his insides were being stretched out and torn all over again beyond their limitations. The object was big and it *hurt* , more than he could *stand.*

The memories started plaguing his mind, causing tears to well up in his eyes. Even with Vegeta holding him down, he had to fight against the urge to ask them to stop.

"Here, *take my hand,* Kakarot. You can squeeze it as tightly as you need to if it would help distract you from the pain." Vegeta said, taking his hand into his own. "Look me in the eyes and keep your focus on me. Try not to think about anything else."

"It *hurts* , Vegeta…" Goku was crying. He clawed at Vegeta's hand in a desperate attempt to keep himself calm.

"I *know* , but you're doing *great*... " Vegeta said sincerely, caressing Goku's face with his free hand and wiping away the tears that were falling down his cheeks. "You *will* get through this, I *promise*... Just a little longer…"

Vegeta could have given him a speech about how he was a Saiyan and how this "paled in comparison to the foes he had beat on the battlefield", but he knew all too well that those things weren't comparable. This was something completely *different* .

Once the speculum was pulled out of him, Goku took a moment to physically relax.

"Well, I'm glad that *that's* over…" He said, letting his bangs shadow his eyes. "You must think I'm pathetic, right now."

"Now why in the world would you assume that? Honestly, I'm ***proud*** of you…" Vegeta said, gently pulling him into an embrace.

"But *why* ? All I did the whole time was cry like a baby." Goku laughed, feeling humiliated.

"Tears are *nothing* to me, Kakarot." Vegeta insisted. "What's important is that you had the courage to stick through this to the end and see it done *regardless* of the discomfort you knew it would cause you. There was nothing ‘pathetic' about what I saw in you today… You are *strong.*"

It was at that moment that Goku once again broke down into a fit of sobs, overwhelmed by just how draining the entire process had been.

Vegeta smiled softly, combing through Goku's hair with his fingers. "...It is over now, you can finally relax…"

There were other things that happened, but a large portion of Goku's memories were shot because of the pills, so he didn't remember it well.

He found himself frequently drifting off to sleep due to how tired he was. He wasn't all there and Vegeta could see that. His speech was somewhat slurred as well.

…

"So are you… still up for going out to eat somewhere?" Goku asked sheepishly, once he had received his discharge papers.

"Of course. I told you I *would* , didn't I…?" Vegeta said. "Aren't you going to use a Senzu bean for your… backside? If so, you should probably go see Korin."

"Nah, I think I'll pass..." Goku said dismissively, gazing off to the side.

"Why not? You *are* in pain, aren't you?" Vegeta looked at him incredulously.

"Yeah, but those Senzu beans should be used in battle, not over something like this." Goku looked away, as if his own pride had just been insulted. The very idea of having to use one to heal himself over something like *sexual assault* was just demeaning to him. He was a *warrior* . A *Saiyan* . Pain like this should be *nothing* to him.

What he couldn't say was that some part of him still felt responsible for what happened, that maybe he *deserved* to suffer through this for letting his guard down and not stopping it from happening in the first place.

Vegeta frowned. "...Kakarot, there is nothing wrong with… needing *healing* after what he did to you."

Goku turned his face away, and was quiet for a long time. Finally, he spoke back up, changing the subject.

"I should probably go back to Chichi's place for a change of clothes…" Goku fidgeted with his gown. "Although… I can't say I'm really looking forward to telling her what happened yet…"

Chichi had been somewhat unpredictable lately, he never quite knew what to expect from her. He didn't doubt she'd be worried if she found out, but at the same time-

"Then *don't* ." Vegeta said simply, interrupting his thoughts. He wasn't happy about the conversation change but decided to go with it. "Whatever you choose to tell the woman is *your* business. You shouldn't feel obligated to open up to her about any of this unless you're *ready* to."

"Yeah, but it's not like I can really hide this from her." Goku argued. "She'd probably start getting worried about it if she suddenly saw people from law enforcement suddenly popping up at her door and asking to talk with me. She might even think I did something bad."

"So then… You're going to tell her, after all?" Vegeta asked in a low voice. In the end, it was up to Goku what he wanted to do.

Goku nodded. "Yeah, but not *all* the details. Just some of them."

Vegeta swallowed and turned away somewhat.

"Well, it's not like I can't stop you." He said. "However… If you need me to come with you, I can..."

"What? No way, Vegeta, you don't have to do that, really." Goku insisted. "Chichi may get angry sometimes, but she wouldn't… fuss at me over something like that. At least I don't think she would…"

His uncertainty in his own statement gave Vegeta all the more reason to doubt him.

"Regardless, I'm still coming with you. Just in case."

If an argument with Chichi was even *part* of what led to this, then Vegeta wanted to confront the matter at hand. He highly doubted Goku would do it himself. Besides, there was also something else he wanted to talk to her about anyways.

"Are you really sure you want to? We *could* just plan to meet up somewhere later if not." Goku said, placing two fingers to his forehead.

"No, it's fine. Just hurry up and take us there." Vegeta said, holding his hand.

"Well, alright…" Goku said, doing as asked.

…

Chichi was washing the dishes when Goku and Vegeta appeared next to her.

"Hey, Chichi."

"Goku!" Chichi screamed, startled. A plate fell on the floor shattering. "How many times have I told you to not scare me like that?! You near about gave me a heart attack!"

"Yeah, sorry about that." Goku giggled nervously. "I came here to get a change of clothes. You don't mind, do you?"

"No, just… Hold on, have you been in the hospital? What happened?" Chichi ran up to him and started feeling him out for injuries. "You didn't get into another fight, did you?"

"No, it's nothing, so please just listen to me… I…" Goku quickly started tensing up at the overload of abrupt physical contact. His breaths were starting to become somewhat uneven due to the panic he was feeling. He wanted her to back off, but couldn't say it.

A trauma-fueled reaction, Vegeta could only assume.

"Hey, get back. Can't you see he's stressed out? Just give him some space." Vegeta scolded Chichi, prying her away from him.

Fortunately, Chichi listened and did as asked in that moment, noticing it herself. She frowned a bit. She hadn't intended to hurt him. "Goku, I'm sorry… if I… pushed you too far… Are you okay?"

But Goku wasn't all there, he was trying his best to tell himself there was nothing to be afraid of. It was just Vegeta and Chichi there with him. *It's not **him***.

"Just *calm down* , Kakarot…" Vegeta offered in as soothing a voice as he could offer. "Chichi isn't going to hurt you… She *didn't know* ."

"I'm sorry, I just…" Goku closed his eyes for a second to regain his breath. "I was starting to get overwhelmed. Everything *reminds* me of him..."

"Of *who* ? What's going on?" Chichi inquired softly, her eyes filled with genuine concern and guilt. Not receiving a response, she looked towards Vegeta, desperately wanting an explanation. "Vegeta, I've never seen him like this before. Did something happen?"

Upon hearing her question, Vegeta was about to open his mouth but Goku cut him to it.

"Chichi… there's something you need to know…" Goku looked over at her, slowly managing to calm down. "It's really important to me that you stay calm."

The woman let out a long sigh, and then, she closed her eyes - as if she was mentally steeling herself for something that was going to be very difficult.

"... Okay..." she murmured softly. "Go on, tell me whatever you need to..."

Chichi in reality had no clue what he wanted to say, so she couldn't help but get a bad feeling, but was pressing him to speak anyways.

Hearing Chichi's confirmation to continue, Goku hesitated before speaking. "...This morning, I was…"

He wanted to continue but immediately stopped himself when Goten entered the room.

"Dad!" The boy smiled, running up to hug him. "Welcome back!"

It had to have been the worst timing, but Goku grinned back to greet his son anyways. "Hey, Goten, how was your day?"

"I went and saw a movie earlier with Trunks! It was super awesome!" Goten said, excitedly.

"Oh? You'll have to tell me all about it later, okay? I just got out of the hospital and I'm not feeling too well right now." Goku said.

"Why were you at the hospital?" Goten wanted to know.

"Well… It's like this… uh…" Goku couldn't even find the words to explain himself, not in front of his son. He looked to Chichi, in hopes that she would get him out of this one.

Sensing Goku's nervousness, Chichi decided to say something. "Goten sweetie, why don't you go back to your room for now. Your father and I were discussing something."

"*Why* ? What happened?" Goten asked, sounding worried, vaguely sensing the mood in the room. "You're not fighting again, are you?"

"Just do what your mother told you." Vegeta said, in a harsher tone than intended. It was clear to him that Goku was overcrowded right now and needed more space.

"...Okay…" Goten still seemed reluctant, but after receiving an irritated look from Vegeta, he complied, returning to his room.

Goku was left with Vegeta and Chichi, trying to think about what to do or how to put what had happened into words. He looked back up at Chichi, but couldn't keep her gaze for long.

"...There was this… guy..., who raped me this morning, and I-" He finally started to explain, his voice low, and solemn, the words making him feel dirty all over again.

"... *What* ? You were... *raped* ?" Chichi asked, interrupting him. She looked as if she had been struck; as if she didn't even want to consider it as a *possibility* . "...Oh, please tell me you're joking... *Please* , Goku..."

She sounded as if she were trying to deny its existence with everything in her, as if she was looking for *any* other explanation, *beyond* the obvious. His words hurt her more than any punch - more than anything she'd ever experienced. She was just trying to process the information; trying to get a grip on herself. All of a sudden she felt like she was going to pass out.

Goku couldn't even look at her. His face heated up from the sheer humiliation he was feeling.

Hearing her momentary denial hurt, but he couldn't blame her. He stayed silent, allowing her to take her time. He had been worried all day about what her reaction was going to be, and now that he was here facing her, he wasn't even certain how to proceed.

Vegeta stood back, his arms crossed over his chest, his lips pressed firmly into a line. His expression was one of fury, and anger.

A pause.

"...I've told you… to be more *careful* before..." Chichi continued, only realizing moments later just how insensitive that probably sounded. She wasn't blaming him, but it did sure as hell sound that way.

"I know… I didn't realize that's what he wanted or I wouldn't have…" Goku muttered, unable to even finish his sentence, looking down, ashamed.

"This isn't your fault, Kakarot. You can't blame yourself." Vegeta said, before giving Chichi a harsh glance.

"I'm sorry... I just… *can't* right now... How *could* he…?" Chichi spoke in a strained voice. She was on the brink of tears. The reality was finally setting in and she was starting to become livid. "...Have you… reported him?"

"...Yeah, Krillin sent me to the hospital for a rape kit afterwards, and said there should be a detective that's going to come out later, so I didn't want you to get the wrong idea if one of them showed up here asking to speak with me…" Goku explained simply, with a downcast look in his eyes.

"...No, of course not, just do what you need to." Chichi said, softly, before trying to think of any possible remedy that she could offer him. "Hopefully you won't have to worry... about seeing him again, in public anyways... Tell me... Is... there… anything I can do for you? Anything that you need? Like medicine or...? You can talk to me about it… as much as you want to..."

She had just asked the same question **yet again**.

Goku let his bangs shadow his eyes. "I just… need some time."

Chichi had wanted to embrace him, but upon seeing him flinch, she gave a silent nod, and just opted to give his shoulder a light squeeze.

"... I'll be here... when you're ready, okay?" she whispered softly. "You're strong. I believe in you."

"Thanks, Chichi…" The physical contact scared Goku. She had touched him so many times before, and yet it felt so foreign to him now. He gave a small smile. "I'm thinking about going to eat somewhere with Vegeta in a little while. You wouldn't mind if I go and take a shower, would you?"

"Of course, Goku... go ahead…" Chichi smiled, as Goku moved to leave. Once he was out of the room, she sat in a chair at the table and broke down crying with only Vegeta to bear witness to it.

"I… I've always warned him how people can be…" she choked out. "But you know Goku… He doesn't pick up on those things. He constantly puts himself into situations that could get him hurt without even *realizing* it…"

Vegeta sighed at her words, crossing his arms. "Kakarot's innocent nature and difficulty with reading social cues is no excuse for what that monster did to him. He isn't to blame for this."

"I know… I'm not saying he is. I'm just… worried for him. How could this even *happen* ?" Chichi barely knew anything and that lack of knowledge was destroying her.

Vegeta had so much he wanted to say to that but there was another matter entirely weighing on him, and he never *was* one to beat around the bush.

"There's something you should be aware of." He began. "The whole reason he went out this morning is because of what *you* said to him."

Chichi looked up at him, genuinely confused as she blotted away her tears. "Something I said? What are you talking about, Vegeta?"

Vegeta sighed. He didn't want to become confrontational with her if he could help it but he refused to sugarcoat this. "Was it not *you* who told Kakarot if he loved training in the other world so much that he should have just *stayed there?* "

Chichi's expression quickly turned from one of confusion to one of shock and guilt. "Wait, *that* ? Hold on, you don't mean he was… Oh."

"Yes, Chichi, he was *suicidal* when that man approached him, and he didn't want to come back here. That is *part* of why he went with him. Why he was so vulnerable. He wasn't in the right state of mind."

"I…. I didn't *mean* it like that… It's just… Gohan was *visiting* at the time, so when Goku asked to train with him and Goten, I got… *angry* … I wasn't really thinking about what I was saying, it just… came out…" Chichi held a hand over her mouth as the realization dawned on her. "So all of this is my fault…?"

Vegeta sat down in front of her. "No, I didn't say that… And I don't want you blaming yourself for this. However…"

"What is it?" Chichi inquired.

Vegeta paused, trying to come up with a way to approach this subject without over stepping his boundaries. Krillin's warning and request worried him more than he wanted to admit.

"...I don't think he should continue staying here. What Kakarot needs right now is a stable environment… One that he can overcome this in, *away* from all of the distractions… What's been going on between you two… It isn't healthy, for either one of you. *Or* your children."

"...Honestly, you're probably right about that…" Chichi admitted. "I do care about Goku, but we're just so… *different* . Because of that, we rub off on each other way too much and sometimes, I get carried away and end up saying things I later regret."

"Hold on… You're actually agreeing with me?" Vegeta was surprised. He had expected Chichi to respond much differently to his suggestion. This situation had really been an eye-opener for everybody who *knew* about Goku's situation.

"Yeah, it's not like I want to kick him out or anything, but, to be honest, I don't think he's happy staying here." Chichi explained. "Still… Even though I've suggested he find somewhere else to live before, a place he'd be happier at, he didn't know where he'd go and he didn't want to move away from Goten, which is *understandable* , I guess. He *is* his father, after all."

"I see…" Vegeta mused. "Perhaps I could… talk to him later about it… Bulma made a similar suggestion about this in the past, so he *could* stay with *us* , I suppose..."

"You think she would be willing to do that?" Chichi looked at him, smiling a bit. "Oh, that would be *wonderful*, Vegeta."

Vegeta blushed a bit, becoming flustered. "Look, I can't make any *promises* that he'll agree to it, but I *am* willing to *try* , okay? For Kakarot…"

…

"Thank you for letting me have this. You're so hot. And nice. You're the nicest person I've ever been with. You didn't even hit me once."

Goku stood in the shower, washing himself repeatedly, as the memories continued flooding back to him.

All he could see and feel was that man on top of him, *inside* of him. He could still remember screaming from the pain as his rapist penetrated him over and over again to the point it tore his skin apart. The man's hands were on his legs, on his arms, and exploring every part of his body like he was some animal, like he was an *object on display*.

"You must be feeling* something *down there, since you're* erect*."

I didn't ***want*** *that…! I didn't want* ***any*** *of that, so why…? Why couldn't I* ***stop*** *it…? Why would my body* ***lie*** *like that?*

He broke down into a fit of sobs, tears falling from his eyes. They mixed in with the water streaming down his face. Using the rag he was holding, he had started aggressively scrubbing into

his wrist to the point his skin was raw. He wanted the memories *gone* . He couldn't breathe.

At some point he realized he was bleeding, running his fingers over his marred skin when he saw the damage that he had caused to his arm.

Oh, crap, I didn't intend to go that far. What's gotten into me…?

It was in that same moment that he realized the sight of the blood had snapped him back to the present.

*Did that… help somehow…? **No…** I can't **think** like this. Hurting myself isn't going to solve **anything** . I just need to calm down…*

Despite telling himself this, he had been scratching himself all day. He didn't even know *why* , but it almost seemed to keep him calm.

But Goku didn't want to be like that. He didn't *want* to rely on such an unhealthy coping mechanism to keep his emotions under check. He felt pathetic, right now, like he couldn't possibly get any *weaker* .

*What am I even **doing…** ?*

He kneeled down, curling in on himself. His backside hurt in the process. He ran his fingers through his hair, letting the rag drop to his side.

I just want these memories to go away…

"Hey. Kakarot. Are you almost done? You've been in there for over an hour now." Vegeta's voice snapped him out of his thoughts. He was standing outside the door.

"Wait, has it really been that long already? Sorry, I'll be out in a few minutes." Goku said, apologetically, turning off the water, which had started to become cold.

"Hmph. Just hurry up, already, clown. If we're going to do this, then I'd rather not have to wait much longer." Vegeta responded, but despite his words, he didn't sound *too* annoyed.

Goku didn't respond this time, looking back down at the injury on his arm.

I should probably cover this before Vegeta or anybody else sees it…

He got out of the tub and pulled on one of his other fighting gis that he had brought into the bathroom as back up. The wrist cuffs he had on hand were just *barely* enough to cover the injury he had done to his arm, but it was better than nothing.

His hair was still damp when he came out, although he had dried it off to the best of his ability.

"Okay, I'm finished." He said.

"About time. So how are you feeling…?" Vegeta asked him, surprising both himself and Goku with his question. He had heard him crying in the bathroom, but didn't want to make any kind of deal about it.

"Much better now that I've taken a shower, actually." Goku smiled.

Vegeta could tell he was lying, but he simply sighed, softly grabbing Goku's wrist and pulling him towards the door. "Come with me. There's a place I want to take you to."

"Oh, uh, okay." Goku seemed a bit taken aback, but chose to follow him. His wrist was still sore from what he had done to it, so he couldn't help but flinch a bit.

Vegeta noticed it but assumed it was from his fear of physical contact so he didn't question it. However, he did loosen his grip on Goku's arm as a way of showing he meant no harm by it.

"Goku, wait…" Chichi's voice called out to him, coming around the corner.

Goku looked up at her. "What is it, Chichi?"

"About what I said to you… yesterday…" Chichi bit her lip, gazing down. "I need… to apologize. It was wrong of me."

Goku was quiet for a moment, taking in her apology. He smiled. "Hey, don't worry about it. I'm not upset about it anymore, okay?"

"Still, if I hadn't said what I did, then… You wouldn't have have been *hurt* ." Chichi's voice cracked.

"Chichi, none of this is your fault… You can't blame yourself for what he did to me…" Goku said. "And besides, maybe it's for the best that this happened. I've *reported* him, so… if we're lucky, he won't be able to hurt anybody else again after this is over with."

There was nothing *lucky* about it. The truth was, this was just a desperate attempt to rationalize what had been done to him, just how badly he had been hurt. It was the only positive he had left to cling to, that just maybe the man who had *hurt* him would be put behind bars so he wouldn't be able to do the same thing to *another* .

What he couldn't tell her or anybody else, however, was that Chichi's words the day before were only the *push* . In actuality, he had been having those thoughts for a while, even *before* that. He was too good at hiding it for anybody to notice that something was wrong.

Goku looked away. "Anyways, I'll see you later…"

"Be careful out there..." Chichi said, forcing a smile. "And Vegeta…"

"Hm?" Vegeta gazed over at her upon hearing his name.

Chichi met his eyes with a serious expression. "You had better treat him *well* , you got that…?"

“…You don't need to worry.” Vegeta turned away, keeping his hold on Goku's hand. “He'll be safe with me…”

…

"So where is it you wanted to take me?" Goku asked as he followed Vegeta in the air.

"...You'll see soon enough. Actually…, if you must know, there's this particular restaurant that I think you'll like." Vegeta explained. "The steak there is truly *outstanding* ."

"Hey, uh… It's not anything *too expensive* , is it?" Goku suddenly looked a bit apprehensive. "I don't really have a lot of zenni on me."

"Forget about the cost. *I'll* cover it." Vegeta turned his focus back ahead of him. "I just… want you to enjoy yourself."

Not that he minded. He didn't go out often, but thanks to Bulma, he had as much money as he could need to afford essentially anything.

Goku was hesitant at first, but it wasn't like he could turn down free food. "Well, if you're really sure about this, I guess it couldn't hurt."

Despite saying this, there was a feeling of anxiety forming in the pit of his stomach.

The last time somebody gave him free food was-

"Good. Come on, then." Vegeta slowly flew down towards his destination - A large building by the name of *Aoife's Steakhouse* .

Once they were on the ground, Vegeta and Goku made their way through the crowd. He tried his best to bite back his irritation when several people bumped into him. "Damn it all… Can't these people *watch where they're going* …?"

"Hey, are you feeling okay?" Goku asked, worried and feeling a little guilty. "We can leave if you want. I don't want you to put yourself through this if it means getting stressed out about it."

"No, I assure you I'm *fine* . Follow me." Vegeta muttered, opening the doors of the building.

Since Vegeta seemed insistent on going through with this, Goku didn't protest, allowing himself to be led by Vegeta through the restaurant.

Vegeta opted for taking a private booth if only because it was just a little bit quieter. When he sat down, he noticed the other Saiyan was still standing. He seemed like he was distracted by something. His eyes were darting around the room.

"What's wrong, Kakarot?" Vegeta asked, wanting to get him to loosen up a bit. "Aren't you going to sit down?"

His voice snapped Goku back to his surroundings.

"Oh, uh right... Sorry..." The man said apologetically, sitting down across the table from him.

He was visibly disturbed, fidgeting, *drumming his fingers* ***again…***

Vegeta frowned a bit, he couldn't stand seeing him like this. He wanted to say something. He *needed* to. He had brought him here to help him feel better, not to stress him out *more* .

"Hey." Vegeta gently placed his hands over Goku's. His face had a hint of concern. "Just *calm down* … Relax…"

Vegeta didn't know if he was still stressed out about the stuff from earlier, or if this was something else. He could only assume it was both. But he needed to gauge for an answer anyways, just to find out for certain.

After a long moment, he finally dredged up the courage to ask him the question. "Is there… something you want to *talk* about…? A reason you were drumming your fingers like that? We both know you only do that when you're stressed out about something."

"No… I'm… fine. Really." Goku's voice was low, barely above a whisper. He wasn't looking at him. His eyes were glued to Vegeta's hands, to his *own* hands.

"...Don't lie to me. I can tell that you're *not **fine…***" Vegeta said in a tone that held no judgment. He wasn't mad, just concerned. "Tell me… Is it *me*? Have I… *done* something… to make you uncomfortable…? Do you want me to stop touching you? Is that it?"

Slowly, Vegeta began to feel insecure, worried that he had done something wrong or overstepped a line without intending to. That was the last thing he wanted to do.

He had to know if this was a fault on *his* part. Was it a *mistake* bringing him here? Vegeta didn't know, but he wanted Goku to communicate with him, to speak his mind freely so he could *help* him feel more at ease.

Goku was surprised by just how blunt and to the point his question was. He immediately felt guilty.

"Vegeta, no, it's *not **you***." he shook his head, giving a small smile. "You haven't done anything wrong…"

The truth was, Vegeta's assumption was *almost* spot on, but not because Vegeta had **done** anything, he was only trying to *be there for him*. All of this paranoia, and lack of trust, was in Goku's *head*, and, down deep, Goku *knew* that.

He quickly scolded himself.

I shouldn't be feeling this way.

"Then *what*?" Vegeta asked, a part of him feeling like Goku was only saying that to avoid hurting his feelings. "Is it about… the stuff from *earlier?"*

*Well, of **course** that's a **part** of it, why would I even **ask** that? **Stupid!***

Vegeta felt like he had just asked the obvious in the worst way possible. He could only hope it didn't upset Goku.

Goku turned his gaze away, not wanting to *bother* him with this. "It's…"

*Vegeta has been so nice to me today… He's done more for me than I could ever even **begin** to repay him for… Yet all I can do is feel like… **this** .*

Why am I so nervous right now?

*This isn't… a **date…** is it? No, it can't be, Vegeta doesn't see me that way. We're just friends.*

*But… even if he **did feel that way** , he wouldn't… expect something from me for this, or try anything weird, right?*

*No, he isn't that kind of **person** . I just need to **trust** him . He only brought me here to help me feel better.*

I need to stop thinking about these things. I'm just getting myself worked up over nothing.

"I think we had a good time. You* did *have a good time, didn't you? I even gave you a sandwich and a drink, and then we had hot sex. I just wanted to make you feel better because you looked so sad."

The voice of Allan suddenly echoed in his head, causing Goku to bite down onto his lip so hard it drew blood. He closed his eyes, trying to stay calm. Tears welled up in his eyes, as his mind once again started becoming clouded by the memories. Slowly he started to pull his hands away from Vegeta's grip and hugged himself, digging his nails into his arms. Before he knew what was happening, he broke down crying. His bangs shadowed his eyes. "I'm… sorry…"

Because of **him…** *Because of* ***what that man did to me*** *, I can't even trust the people I care about, or the person that I* **love***.*

Somewhere down the line, Goku had come to the conclusion that he had feelings for Vegeta, but after what happened to him that morning with Allan, he had suddenly found himself questioning Vegeta's intentions. Every time he caressed his face, or held his hand, or hugged him - gestures that Goku had started to ***love*** coming from him over the past few months - there was now the voice somewhere at the back of his mind telling him that the other saiyan was going to - or wanted to - do something else, to *hurt* him. That he was *expecting* something from him just for being nice.

"I don't know what's…" He choked out with frustration. Blood was starting to form in the fresh scratches on his arms. "What's *wrong* with me…?"

Vegeta's heart ached as he watched him cry, hearing his words. It took him a moment to form his response. "Hey, don't *apologize*... There is nothing… *wrong* with you…"

Goku heard his words, but couldn't bring himself to respond. He kept clawing into his skin, trying his best to stifle his sobs. It's like he wasn't entirely *there* .

"Kakarot…" Seeing the blood increasing, Vegeta felt the familiar sense of simultaneous urgency and helplessness creeping back up on him that he had felt earlier that day. He started to speak up again, but a voice interrupted him.

"Are either of you ready to order? I can…"

It was a waiter. She trailed off into silence, seeming to recognize the mood.

"Give us some time." Vegeta said, glancing back at her. "It may be a while."

"Is he okay?" The woman asked. "We can call somebody if he's not feeling well."

"No, he will be fine… I can handle this." Vegeta said, despite his own uncertainty.

"Alright. Just wave when you're ready to order." The woman said kindly, walking off.

Vegeta then turned his attention back to Goku, who seemed even more stressed out than before.

"Kakarot, you… You need to stop that." He said weakly.

What *should I* ***do*** *? Should I hug him? No, I don't think he* wants *to be touched right now. But still… I can't just sit idly by and do nothing while he's* ***hurting himself*** *right in front of me. I have*

*to **do** something. **Think** , damn it.*

Forcing himself to get up, he cautiously moved around the table so he could sit next to Goku.

After a few seconds, he spoke up again, leaning over and cocking his head a bit so he could still meet the other man's eyes. "Listen to me… I know you're in pain right now, but you can't… keep hurting yourself like this. Whatever it is that's bothering you, we can *talk* about it…"

He already had a pretty big idea what it was related to, but he wasn't a mind reader. As such, the exact thoughts going through Goku's mind was anybody's guess unless he told them.

"I *can't*... " Goku tried to speak in a strained voice, momentarily releasing his nails from his arms. "I don't… know *why* I'm *feeling* this way... ″

Goku *did* know why, but at the same time he *didn't* . He wanted to tell himself he was just overreacting. That this wasn't normal, even given his situation. He felt so *stupid* for it.

″ Feeling *what* way…?" Vegeta encouraged, without pressure.

There was a brief silence as Goku hesitated.

" *Distrustful*... " He finally managed, hanging his head in shame like he had just confessed to committing some crime. "Of everybody. Even *you* …"

Vegeta was quiet for a moment after hearing his words. While it did *hurt somewhat*, he couldn't feel offended by it, because he knew *why*. It wasn't a personal attack on *him*. This was all because of ***that man***, the one who had hurt Kakarot so badly and preyed on his kind nature and trust.

"That's what this is about?" Vegeta inquired, without judgment. "That's nothing to be ashamed for. What you're feeling right now… It's completely *normal*…"

"It is…?" Goku asked, in a low voice, not wanting to believe it.

"Yes, Kakarot…" Vegeta mumbled. "It's… not… *unusual*... to struggle with… *trusting others* after experiencing something as traumatic as what you just went through."

"Maybe so, but…" Goku momentarily trailed off, starting to scratch at arms again. "...You remember how I said he… gave me food before he did that…? I…"

He couldn't finish his sentence. Truth be told, he couldn't even put it into words. He didn't know how to *explain* it. He was *afraid* to even try.

At that moment, everything was finally beginning to make sense to Vegeta. The desire to kill Goku's rapist in cold blood started resurfacing once more, but he knew he had to stay calm. He tilted his head towards him.

He folded his arms and softly leaned against Goku.

"Let me guess…" He approached the subject as carefully as possible but it wasn't like he could beat around the bush on this one. "You were worried that *I* might *try* something, *weren't* you…? And put pressure on you to do something you weren't comfortable with as some sort of *payment* for bringing you here and covering your meal cost. Is *that* it…?"

He wasn't angry - at least not at Goku. He was only asking for the facts.

"It's *stupid* , I *know…"* Goku's voice cracked as he ignored the damage he was causing to his skin. "This is why I said there's something *wrong* with me. I shouldn't be *thinking* these things about the people I care about… About you or *anybody* . And I'm trying not to, but… *I… I can't help it…* "

Goku's nails were covered in blood at this point. Vegeta had had enough. He couldn't stomach it anymore. He had asked him to stop, but Goku had gone right back to hurting himself again.

"Regardless, that doesn't make you stupid nor does it mean anything is wrong with you. Please… *stop that* ." He reached out and attempted to pry his hands away from his arms, but Goku was completely *refusing* to cooperate, much to his frustration. "I-"

He cut himself off briefly when his hand slipped across Goku's wrist cuff, unintentionally sliding it back in the process to reveal the injury he had been hiding. His eyes widened, as he forcibly turned Goku's arm around to get a better look at it.

That definitely wasn't there earlier. It looks fresh.

"Kakarot…" Vegeta almost couldn't speak at first, not entirely knowing what he was even *looking* at. It appeared like something had been repeatedly rubbed into his skin to create an injury favoring a burn mark. "What is this? What happened to your *arm*… ?"

"It's *nothing* ." Goku immediately turned his head away, unable to face him. He hadn't intended for him to see this. "Just an accident…"

Vegeta could immediately tell he was hiding something. This kind of injury didn't happen from a mere accident. Concern began to consume him, as the implications suddenly dawned on him.

"Hold on, did *you* do this ... ?" Vegeta asked tentatively, in disbelief.

Goku still wouldn't speak or look at him, more or less confirming Vegeta's suspicions.

" *Answer* me." Vegeta said in a harsher tone than intended, desperate for an explanation.

Goku already knew that Vegeta wasn't going to drop it until he answered. So he decided to tell him the truth.

"It happened… when I was in the shower earlier… " Goku started to confess, his leg bouncing due to his nerves. "I started… getting *stressed out* about something ***he*** said to me… And I… *wasn't thinking* …"

He was certain that Vegeta was going to call him weak and a complete idiot for this.

No sane person does this sort of thing.

Despite what Goku assumed, however, Vegeta didn't even *know* what to say at first, nothing seemed *appropriate*.

After a long silence, he felt himself let out a breath he didn't know he was holding in.

"Is the other one like this as well…?" He forced himself to ask.

"No… it's just that one." Goku mumbled.

As Vegeta pondered the situation, he just continued to hold Goku's wrist between both of his hands. He had to take a moment to think.

"Are you… mad at me…?" Goku suddenly asked in a low voice. His question caught Vegeta off guard.

Vegeta looked up to meet the gaze of the other Saiyan, who was staring at him. Vegeta could tell that for whatever reason, his opinion meant everything to Goku right now. He was genuinely worried about being judged for this.

"No… I'm *not… mad* at you." Vegeta spoke in a low voice, shaking his head as he slowly pulled back up Goku's wrist cuff to cover the wound again. "But… *this*... this isn't how you *deal* with things.. . "

Saying that he was frustrated was an understatement.

"I know… It won't happen again." Goku said, despite knowing such a statement was easier said than kept.

"...Just make sure it doesn't..." Vegeta grabbed a napkin and ran it over one of the scratches near his shoulder, blotting up some blood that was starting to trickle down his arm. A saddened look rested in his eyes. "...Your life… has more *value* than this… "

Goku looked down with a guilty expression, unsure how to even respond to that, some part of him wishing Vegeta hadn't seen it. He couldn't stand making him worry like this. Causing him to worry about him again was the *last* thing he had wanted to do.

What hurt even more was the voices inside of him contradicting everything Vegeta had just told him.

Does it really though…? What if I **deserve** *this…?*

Vegeta closed his eyes for a moment, sighing. When he opened them again, he was calmer, able to finally think.

"Swear to me something…" He gazed at him with an intense expression on his face. "If you even *think* of doing something like this *again* , I want you to *come to me* ***immediately*** . Can you do that?"

Goku could go to somebody else as well - like Krillin, but that didn't need to be said. He was putting himself out there in hopes that Goku would rely on him should the need arise.

"Mhm." Goku hung his head and nodded.

"And, hey, look at me." Vegeta slowly reached up, cupping Goku's cheek to get him to meet his eyes again. "About what we were discussing earlier… I know what you're going through right now and you'll probably feel this way for a while. But still… For what it's worth, I don't want you to be so *nervous* around me. I would never even *think* of doing *anything* like what ***he*** did to you… You have my *word* on that."

Goku didn't respond, but he wanted to believe Vegeta. He had stopped crying and had finally calmed down some, much to Vegeta's relief.

He met his gaze, thinking over his words. "...I'm not… used to you being this *nice* to me. I know you were trying to get me through that earlier, but still… I'm surprised you offered to bring me to a restaurant…"

He quickly regretted saying that. He hadn't intended it in a bad way.

Fortunately, Vegeta wasn't even all that offended by it. He was painfully aware of how his own personality issues could have led Goku to feeling that way. After all, those same issues were a large portion of the reason he and Bulma had gotten divorced.

For a long time, Vegeta was silent, his expression unreadable for Goku.

"Can I… tell you something…?" He finally asked.

"Of course, what is it?" Goku cocked his head curiously.

Vegeta gave a downcast look as folded his arms on the top of the table. "...When I first started staying on Earth, I couldn't *stand* it here. But at some point… Bulma… She started showing me around, introducing me to new places, and I slowly began to realize exactly what this world has to offer, the food here being only a small *portion* of that. It's true that I don't always go out places like everybody else does, but… on occasion, I do like to come here, if only… just to *unwind* . That's the same reason I brought *you* here as well, because I thought it might help you somehow…"

He awkwardly ran a hand through his hair as he forced himself to find the words. He didn't want to make this worse or overstep his boundaries. In that moment, his vision was suddenly invaded by the blasted liquid forming in his eyes. "I just wanted… for you to see that there are still *good things* out there. Things you can look *forward* to… And what you said to me earlier… About wanting to die… It *worried* me, okay…? I…"

Goku felt a lump in his throat when he realized Vegeta was crying, not even sure how to respond. He hesitantly reached up and grazed his fingers over his shoulder, which was shaking. "Vegeta-"

"*I won't* ***lose you again…*** *Not like* ***that***." Vegeta let the words slip out in an instant, revealing just how scared and hurt he was.

Unable to bear the guilt he was feeling for making Vegeta cry, Goku pulled him into an embrace. The physical contact scared him more than anything, but he had to do this, to offer *something,* even if he didn't have the words for it.

He rested his cheek on the top of Vegeta's head, seeming to surprise him. Vegeta clearly hadn't expected it, but slowly seemed to relax into his embrace. In that moment, Goku felt tears well up in his own eyes.

How could I have forgotten…? Back when I died fighting Cell and was gone all those years, Vegeta was one of the people who was affected the most *by it.*

"I'm sorry… I won't… I won't leave you…" His voice became raspy as he forced himself to continue. "...I'm just so… *tired..,* Vegeta *,* of *everything*... And after what happened this morning ... *I*... "

In the end, he couldn't even finish the sentence. He was afraid to. Vegeta pulled back, meeting his gaze.

"I understand… Why don't we go back to Beerus's world and train some more…?" Vegeta said in as soft of a voice as he could manage. "Take some time away… and get your mind off of the things that have been stressing you out. Would you… like that…?"

"...I… I don't know…" Goku paused at his offer, mulling it over. "Maybe that would help…? It has been a while since I've been there."

Vegeta tenderly brushed some hair out of his face. "Alright. In a few weeks, after some of this mess dies down, We'll contact Whis and see if he can come and get us. In the meantime, I need you to press through this, and finish up answering any… questions they may have for you about… *that man* **.** Alright?"

"...Mhm." Goku yet again gave another sheepish nod. Despite the uncertainty he was feeling, some part of him wanted to trust Vegeta. After all, training always helped. It ***had to***.

"I *mean it* ." Vegeta said grievously, pointing a hand at his chest and looking into his eyes with a great intensity. "If there is a *problem* , then you come talk to me so that we can solve it *together,* just like we did today. But *running away and choosing death to* ***deal*** *with that problem* ; ***that*** is something I will *not* allow, under *any* circumstances. Because *suicide* , Kakarot… *That isn't the answer to anything.* Are we clear?"

Despite hoping for a more wordy response, he felt a wave of relief pass over him when Goku at least offered another nod again, showing he was listening and hearing his words.

"Good. Now why don't we eat?" Vegeta smirked ever so slightly, wiping away the other Saiyan's tears once more before pulling back his hand to give him some space. "You'll probably feel a little better once you get some food into your stomach. Hand me the menu over there."

He still had so many questions that he wanted answers to, but right now he could easily tell Goku still wasn't ready to talk about them. He wouldn't pressure him for anything more. Even *suggesting* he come stay at Capsule Corp could wait. Goku already had too many things going on as it was.

Besides, they'd have plenty of time to discuss all of that other stuff in Beerus's world.

"This one?" Goku reached over and offered him the menu he saw, although there appeared to be a couple different ones.

"No, the other one." Vegeta said taking it when Goku switched it out. He then opened it so Goku could get a look at it. "What do you want to order?"

Goku leaned over, skimming some over some of the items. Vegeta tried his hardest not to blush at the close proximity of their faces, but failed miserably. Fortunately for him, Goku was too distracted by the menu to even notice it.

"I'm not sure, there's too much to choose from." Goku said after a long silence. The truth was he didn't want to waste any more of Vegeta's time than he already had. "Why don't you surprise me…?"

"What, you want *me* to choose *for* you?" Vegeta raised an eyebrow. "Are you sure?"

"Yeah," Goku confirmed. "I figured you'd know more about which ones are good or not since you've been here before."

"You know. I *could* end up ordering something for you that you absolutely despise. Are you really okay with that outcome?" Vegeta asked, his voice dropping to a whisper. Unintentionally, it almost came across as flirtatious—a term that felt still relatively new to Vegeta's vocabulary despite all the time he had spent around *Bulma* .

"It's alright. I trust you to not choose anything *too bad* ." Goku smiled. "Besides, you *know* me, I'll eat basically anything. Just no peas."

"Why peas?" Vegeta inquired. "Do you dislike them?"

"Yeah, Chichi always nags me for it too." Goku mumbled. "She says they're good for me, but personally I can't stand them."

"I see." Vegeta smirked with a hint of mischief, interested in poking at this new sore spot and tease him a bit. "Then maybe I should order a large plate of peas, special *just for you* ."

"No, you *wouldn't* !" Goku glared, defensively.

" *Try* me." Vegeta said smuggly.

" *Vegeta…!* " Goku pulled away, pouting a bit.

Hold on, does he actually think I'm being serious…?

He acts like such a child sometimes.

*Still… It's kind of… **cute** somehow… Shit, Why am I feeling guilty all of a sudden?!*

"Relax. I was only kidding." He relented, deciding not to tease him any further, he looked away with a small blush. "To be honest, I don't really like them either."

Goku seemed surprised by the confession.

"What, you *too* ? I thought it was just me…"

"I don't… *hate* them, but they still taste weird." Vegeta explained. "I prefer to avoid them when I can."

Goku mulled over it. "For me, it's not just the taste. Something about the texture always makes me feel sick for some reason."

"I see. Well, Kakarot, you'll be glad to know that I have something different in mind than peas. I did say that the steak here is *outstanding* , didn't I? Would you like to try it?" Vegeta asked, already guessing what his answer would be.

"Yeah, steak sounds awesome. I'm starving right now." Goku said, his stomach growling.

Vegeta couldn't stop himself from smiling a bit. "Alright. Just give me a moment."

Vegeta then began to scan the room, looking around for the waiter as his finger tapped the table rhythmically. He then made eye contact with the waiter, who soon came over to them and asked for their order.

"... We'll have two Ribeyes and two filets mignons." Vegeta said. "Also a couple sides of mashed potatoes and gravy."

"Of course, is that all? Would you two like a drink to go with that?" The woman asked.

"Just water is fine. What about you, Kakarot?" Vegeta wanted to know.

"Oh, uh… Sweet Tea, I guess." Goku answered with some apprehension.

The waiter politely made her leave, and returned some time later with the two drinks as well as some silverware and their food.

Vegeta placed one of the sides of mashed potatoes and gravy in front of him as well as the knife. "Here, this one's for you. Just remember. We can always get more steak if you're still hungry after this."

"Okay." Goku said, despite the apprehension that was beginning to build up in him once more. It was hard not to worry right now. Sure, in this moment, he was just allowed to relax and eat, but what about later? What about down the road when he'd have to see ***that man's face again*** ?

He started fidgeting with the silverware, particularly the knife he had just picked up with the intention of cutting his steak. Out of nowhere, a voice entered his head, *taunting* him, telling him it would be the perfect kind of object to hurt himself - *to make himself bleed* - but he quickly scolded himself yet again, trying his best to *ignore* it.

Goku was long since used to suicidal thoughts popping into his head by now, but never once before today had he had outright urges to hurt himself just for the sake of it. He couldn't stand it.

Vegeta had asked him to talk about it if he felt like doing that again, but Goku didn't want to worry him, or disappoint him, especially when he was trying his best to make him feel *better* .

Vegeta noticed the way the other Saiyan was just holding the knife and staring. He had no idea what he was thinking but he didn't like the look in his eyes. Whatever was on his mind *couldn't be good* .

Cautiously, he forced himself to speak.

"What's wrong?" He asked, pretending not to notice it. "Aren't you going to cut it?"

"Oh… right…" Goku's voice was low, almost like he had come out of some kind of trance.

"What? Does it not look appetizing to you?" Vegeta sarcastically teased, despite being almost certain that it had nothing to do with the food.

"No, it looks great. And smells good too." Goku smiled, but Vegeta could tell it was forced.

"You sure sound confident." Vegeta deadpanned, before reaching out towards the knife he was holding. "Give me that. I'll cut it for you and *make* you try it."

Vegeta wouldn't normally do this but he needed an excuse to get the knife out of Goku's hand and this seemed like the perfect opportunity for that, to distract him from whatever dangerous thoughts could be going through his head.

"Vegeta…" Goku started to protest but didn't stop him.

Vegeta then began to cut the meat into perfect squares, using Goku's fork to pick up one of the pieces of steak. "Here, now tell me how it tastes."

"Hey, you don't have to feed me, you know. I can do this myself." Goku pouted again, his cheeks heating up.

At the sight, Vegeta felt like his face was on fire, his heart pounding faster than ever before when he realized the implications of what he himself was even *doing* .

He quickly turned his head away and shoved the fork holding the steak into Goku's chest, but not in an aggressive way. "Then just *do* it already, you clown…"

Was I really about to ***spoonfeed*** **Kakarot***? Damn it, what the hell has gotten into me?! I like him, but this is just* ***embarrassing****!*

"Okay, *fine, I will* ." Goku muttered, taking it from him. He took the food into his mouth and began to chew on it. Within seconds, his eyes lit up, showing more life than they had had in them all day. He grinned excitedly as he let the flavor set in. "Oh man, you were *right* , Vegeta, this is delicious! It's perfectly seasoned and everything!"

Vegeta looked back over at him, feeling a warmth enter his chest when he saw that Goku was genuinely smiling this time.

"See, I *told* you, didn't I?" He said proudly, eating some of his own steak. "This restaurant is one of the most highly regarded in the city for a *reason* ."

"I can see why. I might just have to take you up on your offer for seconds, after all. You don't mind, do you?" Goku wanted to know.

"No, of course not. It's as I said before. You can have as much as you like. And besides," Vegeta assured him, before pulling out a card from inside his uniform. "It was Bulma who gave me this and told me I could get whatever I want with it so that's exactly what I'm doing, and *I* say… *go wild* ."

"Man, you're *awful* , Vegeta." Goku laughed, playfully pushing him.

"Am I really? Don't forget it's benefiting *you* as well right now, Kakarot." Vegeta pointed out.

Not that Bulma would have minded, she was *loaded* . They both knew that, and that's why they could joke so flippantly about it.

Goku giggled nervously. "Well, you got me there."

After that, the two continued to banter on, ordering plate after plate. They almost lost track of time, and for the first time all day - even if only for a little while - Goku actually felt at ease.

…

"Man, this place is awesome." Goku said as they were leaving the restaurant that night. "I had so much fun tonight, and the food here is great. Next time, though, there's a few other menu items that I'd like to try, if you're okay with it."

"Hold on, Kakarot, did you just say 'next time'? Are you actually implying you want me to bring you back here again?" Vegeta leaned in towards him with an auspicious look.

Goku's face heated up when he realized it himself.

"Why? Is that a problem…? I mean… We don't… have to… if you don't want to… I just thought…" Goku stammered a bit shyly, growing uncomfortable when Vegeta didn't respond immediately. "Sorry if I misunderstood…"

Did I say something wrong? I can't tell what he's thinking. I hope he's not mad at me... I really enjoyed spending this time with him, but I'm not sure if he feels the same about it as me. He seemed *happy enough* earlier *, but...*

Goku usually wasn't that obsessive over things like this, at least not to *this* degree, but he couldn't always read Vegeta.

"No, don't apologize. It's… fine." Vegeta said, surprised - *worried* even - by his sudden shift in mood. Goku looked emotionally vulnerable in that moment, like any wrong word could seriously *hurt* him.

Kakarot isn't usually like this. Does me agreeing to let him come with me again really mean that much to him? He could just come back here on his own so why*? Well, whatever, it doesn't matter. I can't stand seeing him like this. I've got to say something.*

He averted his gaze with a small blush. "Just as long as you don't bother me about it everyday, I guess I don't… mind… *too much* …"

"Wait, really?" Goku looked back up again, surprised and excited at that. He leaned in close to him, startling Vegeta a bit with his enthusiasm. "You mean you'd *really be okay* with it? With me being with you?"

It's not like it was a date proposal or anything, and yet with the way Goku was acting one would almost think he was *asking him out or something* . Fortunately, Vegeta knew him well enough to be able to assume that wasn't what Goku had in mind.

Still, Vegeta actually *agreeing* to spend personal time with him had made Goku really happy for some reason.

"S…Sure… But remember, only once in a while, alright…?" Vegeta said, flustered.

"I understand, I'll be sure not to bug you too much about it, but still…" Goku said. "Vegeta…?"

His voice cracked.

"Hm?" Vegeta glanced over at him, immediately rendered speechless when he saw the tears suddenly falling down Goku's face.

"Thank you… for everything." The other Saiyan choked out, trying to force a smile that had never looked sadder. His shoulders were starting to shake as he hung his head, hair falling in his face.

"For just… *putting up with me* … I know I can be... really hard to deal with sometimes, not just for you, but everybody else as well. So you just… *being here with me today, and over these past few months, even*... It means more to me than you could ever even *realize* . I only wish that I could *repay* you somehow…, for everything you've done for me, the kindness you've shown me…"

Even Goku didn't know why he was crying this time, but he couldn't stop himself. His emotions had been running rampant all day. He felt so embarrassed by it. He wasn't the type of person who cried much, but today, after what happened, he hadn't been able to stop himself, the crying fits had been basically uncontrollable.

But Vegeta's efforts to comfort him and just *talk* with him, had sparked something inside of him, he couldn't possibly be more grateful to him right now.

"...Kakarot, look at me…" Vegeta approached him, carefully, *gently* . "You don't… need to owe me *anything* for this. I'm only here right now because I *want* to be. Not because of some *obligation* . All I ask…"

In that moment, he reached out and softly grabbed his hands, resting his forehead against Goku's chest. "All I *want* right now is for you to *stay alive* … Can you… *promise* me that you will at least *try*... ?"

Goku was quiet for a long time but finally spoke back up in a low voice, only audible because Vegeta was right in front of him.

"...Okay." Goku once again rested his cheek on Vegeta's head. "I will… For *you*... "

Vegeta closed his eyes for a second upon hearing that. He wanted Goku to do this for *himself,* not for *him* . But it was a better start than none. It was no doubt the best response he was going to get right now, and that was okay. Goku *needed* him right now; he needed *support* to get back on his feet. "I couldn't ask for anything more. Now… Let's get you back home."

…

When Goku and Vegeta returned to Chichi's, Vegeta decided it was time he probably should head home.

"Will you… be alright here?" He asked. "I mean… Do you need me to *stay* with you until the detective arrives? I don't mind…"

"Nah, I'll be fine… Just go on and get some rest already. I can tell that you're tired." Goku smiled. He didn't want to cause Vegeta any more trouble than he already had.

"Well, if you're absolutely certain about it, then fine... But…" Vegeta felt a lump forming in his throat as he spoke. "Kakarot…"

"What is it?" Goku inquired.

"...If you… ever need to *talk*... " Vegeta paused for a second with concern. "about *anything*... You know where you can find me."

Goku's response was curt, but not with bad intent. Just a simple, "Yeah."

At that moment, Vegeta did something completely unexpected. He hugged him for probably the thousandth time that day. The contact was soft yet firm at the same time. It wasn't one of comfort. This was different somehow. Goku was startled at first, almost scared, but more so confused than anything else. He didn't even know what to think until he heard the next words that came out of Vegeta's mouth.

"I want you to take *care* of yourself…" the smaller Saiyan mumbled into his chest. "That means no *hurting yourself,* got it?"

Goku's eyes widened a bit, before he smiled, hesitantly brushing a hand over Vegeta's head in an attempt to reassure him. His hair was surprisingly soft to the touch. Not that he hadn't felt it before, but he never had the time to focus on that until now.

"Hey, you don't need to worry about me. I'll be fine. I promise." He *said* that, but both he and Vegeta knew *fully well* that such thoughts and urges don't just *go away* overnight, nor does a traumatic event like what Goku had been through. This would take time. "Are you sure you don't want me to use my instant transmission to take you back to Capsule Corp?"

"No, it's fine. I'm planning to stay out a while longer." Vegeta admitted. Goku's hand felt nice, but Vegeta didn't want to linger on it. He looked up at him solicitously. "Just… Will you keep me updated?"

Goku nodded. "Yeah, I'll let you know how things go as soon as I can."

"Alright, I'll see you later then…" Vegeta pulled away, giving his arm a small squeeze.

"Bye, Vegeta…" Goku mumbled quietly, as Vegeta flew off.

For a long time, Goku just *stood there* reflecting on everything that had transpired today, Vegeta's words of encouragement and praise echoing in his head. Somewhere deep inside of him, he felt a small boost of confidence, telling himself he could get through this. He sighed before heading back inside.

…

"So…, how was your night, Goku?" Chichi asked, when she saw him. "Did you have fun?"

"Yeah. The steak at that place was awesome. You should try it sometime." Goku smiled, seeming just a little bit a happier than what he was earlier.

" *Steak* , huh? Wow, sounds like Vegeta really treated you well." Chichi smirked a bit. "The perks of being the father of Bulma's kids, I guess. That entire *family* is loaded. So did you two talk about anything while you were there?"

"Yeah, he said he wants me to come train with him again in Lord Beerus's world in a few weeks. He thought it would help me feel as better." Goku explained. "You don't mind, do you…?"

Normally, Chichi would have fussed at him, but after what had happened today, she knew Vegeta was right. She needed to give Goku some space, in more ways than one. And she trusted Vegeta. If he hadn't already talked with Goku about the other stuff, then he probably would at some other point when he was less weighed down by the matters at hand.

"No, of course not." Chichi nodded placing a hand on both of his shoulders. "Do what you need to, okay? I'll support you in whatever you choose to do. I just want you to get better."

"Okay, thanks, Chichi." Goku started to say. "I-"

He was cut off by a knock at the door.

"Oh, that must be the detective. Let me get it for you." Chichi said letting go and heading to the door, when she opened it, there were two women standing there, a darker skinned woman with dreadlocks who appeared to be in her mid twenties, and an older lady who had fair skin and brown hair. They introduced themselves as detectives, the younger woman being named Fran and the older one Carole.

"We're here to speak with Son Goku. Do you mind if we come in?" The other lady asked.

"Yeah, of course. He's over there." Chichi let them in.

"A detective? What's going on?" Goten suddenly popped his head into the kitchen, to quickly be escorted out by Chichi.

"Goten, honey, why don't we go up to your room for a little while?" Chichi said, taking his hand and urging him towards his room.

"Why? Is dad in trouble?" Goten asked in a low voice, confused.

"No, he's not. Your father was… *hurt* , sweetie." Chichi tried to explain, once they were in Goten's room. "They're trying to arrest the man that did it to him. That's why the detective is here, to talk with him about it."

"But *why* ?" He asked, his confusion growing. "Couldn't dad just beat up the person who did it to him? He's one of the strongest people in the whole universe."

What he didn't understand was that there were more ways to hurt somebody than just purely physical.

Chichi shook her head with a sad smile,

"... Sometimes, Goten… *Power* ... cannot beat… *other kinds* of power..." she explained to him. "... There are many kinds of power..."

"Well, what other kinds of power *are* there?" Goten titled his head at her, not entirely following her explanation.

"... *Emotional* ... power…, Controlling someone, or..." - Chichi paused for a moment, struggling to find the words without scaring him. "... *Hurting* someone… In ways other than just physical harm."

Is this really the only explanation she could come up with? She wasn't doing a very good job at it.

"You mean he made dad sad?" Goten inquired.

"... No..." she whispered. "...It's *more* than just sadness... It's something... that stays with you, for a very long time... Like an open wound..."

Goten thought about it for a second. "Like trauma?"

"...Trauma..." Chichi repeated, "... *Yes*... like *trauma* ... and... just like an *open wound* ... it will *heal* ... but it will *leave* a scar. And that *scar* … You never really heal from... You only... learn to live with it."

"So what did he do to him to traumatize him?" Goten probed for answer.

"He... *assaulted* your father..." Chichi whispered, "... and... he made him feel... *unsafe* in his own body… He hurt him... in a way, that he... will never fully heal from emotionally.... Does that... make sense?"

"I think so… Did he… *rape* dad?" Goten looked up at her with a saddened look on his face.

Goten might be a child but he wasn't stupid. He did know about those things, and yet Chichi's heart broke as soon as the vulgar word came out of his mouth.

"...*Yes, Goten*... He *did*... that's why..." She paused for a moment; she closed her eyes, and then she inhaled a deep breath before letting it out, slowly. "...you father… has to talk to the detective... in order to *get justice*... Just promise me something, Goten."

Goten couldn't stand seeing her looking so sad. "What is it, mom?"

"If you ever meet somebody... *anybody*... and you *loved them* ... do not ever *touch* them... in a way... that would make them feel..." Her voice trembled "... *unsafe* , or *uncomfortable* . Do not *ever* do that, to *anyone* . Do you hear me? ...Can you promise me that?" she asked, feeling as if she needed his reassurance.

Goten nodded. "I promise. I'd never do that to anybody unless they asked me to."

The boy's simple promise felt like such a great relief to Chichi - it wasn't quite the promise that she had asked for, but she would just have to take it. She needed to hear the words from him; and that was the best that she could get.

"Thank you..." Chichi pulled him into a hug. "...Thank you, Goten... And I promise... to do everything... that I can to *help your father* ... so that he can heal... Can you also promise me that?... That you will be there for him?"

"Okay… I don't want Dad to be sad either, so I'll try to do everything I can to make him feel better." Goten said. "But Mom…? Can I... go and spend the night with Trunks?"

Goten's question abruptly changed the subject. This was no doubt a lot for him to process.

"Of course, Goten, go ahead…" Chichi was surprised for a moment, but it was probably for the *best* , as she didn't want him to be here... around this. It was too overwhelming, too much to bear. "Just… be safe, okay?"

Goten had already started picking out a change of clothes and a pair of pajamas by the time he spoke. "Don't worry, I will."

Chichi then took a deep breath, to settle the sudden wave of unease she was feeling, before smiling. She then left the room, letting out a small sigh as she returned to the kitchen.

…

"If you could show me where he lives, that would be a huge help." Fran had said after chatting with Goku for a bit and asking him some basic questions.

"Yeah. I'd be glad to." Goku offered, following them out to their car. He didn't often rely on cars or transportation since he could always fly or use his instant transmission, but once in a while it felt nice to just sit back and ride in a vehicle for a change of pace.

He told them the area to drive to and watched in silence as houses and trees passed him by. Once they reached the area he led them to the exact place. It was part of a townhouse. Even seeing the place again was difficult for him and brought back memories he wanted more than anything forget right now.

"Which one is it?" The detective asked.

Goku pointed at it. "It's that one. The door on the furthest right."

Having her answer, the detective thanked him and left again. They still needed a warrant, but at least they had his location now. It was a better start than none.

All throughout the process the two spoke with compassion and understanding saying that he was brave for coming forth, just like everybody else had been telling him, but he didn't really say much. He couldn't.

…

Vegeta stood in an isolated area with nothing but the ground and rubble surrounding him.

Thought after thought continued swarming through his head, remembering everything Goku had told him; every single detail.

Just knowing that the person he loved had been raped and violated hurt more than he could stand, but the memory of seeing Goku crying and hurting himself, the self-inflicted injury on his wrist, frustrated him just as much.

What if my just being here for him isn't enough? What if he hurts himself again or ***worse*** *? What should I do? I don't want to lose him again, I* ***can't…***

Damn it, all of this is that ***bastard's*** *fault. That monster deserves to* ***die*** *for what he did, yet all Kakarot wants to do is put him in jail?! To let the* ***police*** *handle it?! It doesn't make sense! We could just kill him and be* ***done*** *with* ***it*** *!*

Vegeta clenched his fists, gritting his jaw.

...But still… If I ***did*** *that… I would be taking away… the only thing Kakarot has* ***left*** *.*

This is ***his choice*** *,* ***his*** *trauma,* ***his*** *right to a trial. I have… no* ***right*** *to interfere with that.*

That realization instantaneously hit him like a ton of bricks.

More than anything, even more than revenge, all he wanted right now was for Goku to get better, to *heal* . To be there for him and support him in whatever way he could.

So if that meant leaving it up to Krillin and the others to handle this, then Vegeta would ultimately have no choice but to do that. But still, it *infuriated* him and filled him with an unrivaled sense of helplessness.

In that moment, there was nothing more he could do.

Except shout.

Vegeta ***shouted,*** at the top of his lungs, letting out every bit of frustration and anger that he had been bottling it up.

His throat was slightly sore by the time he was done, but he didn't care. He started blindly sending chi blasts towards rocks and stones for no other reason than to let off steam.

Once he calmed down some, the area was in shambles. Soon, he returned home, ignoring Bulma's attempt at questioning him or the concern she was feeling for why he looked so upset. In the end, he went straight to bed without showering or anything. He was just… *exhausted* .

…

Over the course of the next few days, Goku was in more pain than ever. He didn't want to say it out loud, but even using the bathroom hurt like hell, and the urges to hurt himself had only been getting worse as the memories continued flooding back to him, things which he had temporarily blocked out right out after the assault.

"I can't believe he would *do* that to you." Goku heard Chichi say, somewhere in his clouded state of awareness when she inquired about the pain he seemed to be in and he had no choice but to once again explain that it was from where he had been penetrated.

He didn't respond that time. Instead, he sat down on his bed, looking at the cell phone that Bulma had given him.

Goku didn't use cell phones often, he found no reason to. But he *did choose to keep that one*, just in case he needed to ask Bulma something or call somebody else without using instant transmission and arriving at the most inopportune moments.

However, as he stared at the messages on screen, he quickly found himself wishing he *didn't* have one.

"Hey, it's Allan."

"You up? I sure know I am."

"I miss you already."

"I really miss you."

"I want to take you on a date. I'll treat you nice."

"I can tell you're mad at me. I know I may have messed up with you. I'm sorry. I admit I went too far and got carried away. You're just so hot, I couldn't help myself. You made me so passionate. Don't worry, though, I'll chill out."

At the time, it seemed like a good idea to give his rapist his number just to hold up the image that he really was planning on coming back, but he was sure that everybody around him would think him stupid for what he had done. As long as that man knew his number, he could keep contacting him.

Did the police need to know about this?

What should I do?

"I'm sorry, it's nothing personal, but I think you need to find somebody who actually wants that from you. I'm just not the right person for you and I guess it's partly my own fault for not standing up to you more about how I was feeling." He started to type, not even sure what he was apologizing to him for.

He *had* said how he was feeling, yet the man didn't respect his request to stop or let him go until he had kept him there over four hours, so why…?

Why did he still feel so *bad* for all of this…?

He quickly sent the message before blocking the number. He called Bulma immediately after. It didn't take her long to pick up.

"Hello?"

"Hey, Bulma, I sort of have a… *favor* to ask." Goku felt awkward even asking for this. "You wouldn't mind… uh… maybe changing my number, would you?"

"No? Not really... Why? What's up?"

"Well, uh you see… There's this… *guy*... who messaged me earlier, and I don't want him contacting me again." Goku tried to explain. "I just blocked him, but I'm worried that he could message me again from another number."

"Well, okay, but you'll have to bring your phone by here when you get a chance. I can't change the number unless I have it in hand."

"Alright, thanks Bulma." Goku smiled softly.

"It's no problem. I'll see you later, Goku. Make sure you call me first before you come here."

"Okay, Bye." Goku said, before sighing, tossing the phone off to the side. He started debating. What if Bulma saw the messages and found out about all of this?

Would everybody doubt him as a victim if they saw how he *responded* to him?

As question after question plagued him, his mind started spiraling in a bunch of different directions.

Before he could think of what to say or do, Chichi called out his name, asking him to come into the kitchen, because somebody wanted to talk to him. It was the detective.

He was then brought back to the police department and led into a small room with a single table and dry erase board hanging on the wall. He was given a water and left to his own devices on

several occasions, in which he boredly doodled some faces on the dry erase board.

Over the course of the few hours he was there, he was asked to go into full depth about his experience and what he remembered.

Vegeta wasn't there with him that time, so the process was nerve wracking for him, especially when he was asked to go into full depth about his experience.

"We just have one final question for you. When he was doing those things to you, how did this make you feel?"

Feeling disgusted as he once again thought back to it, he told them the exact same thing he had told Vegeta:

"It made me feel like an animal, like I wasn't even a real person to him…"

"Thank you. That should be all for now."

Much to his comfort, his prosecuting team seemed nice, and praised him for all the info he had given them, telling him once more how brave he was for coming forth over this.

Against his desire to hide it, he also ended up showing them the messages on his phone which he decided to bring, knowing it would be brought up at some point, anyways. One of the women took a picture of it to presumably use it as evidence.

Once he was finished, he used his instant transmission to appear before Bulma. He was so rattled from the experience that he didn't think to ask first if she was decent to see him.

"Goku! I told you to call me first before you did that!" She screamed angrily, quickly wrapping a towel around herself. She had just gotten out of the shower. This wasn't the *first* time this had happened. "Get out!"

Goku practically cried when a shampoo bottle was thrown at his face.

"Ahh! I'm sorry, it won't happen again, I promise! Anyway, here's my phone! I'm just gonna go and talk with Vegeta for a while now, so bye, Bulma!"

He disappeared almost as quickly as he had come, leaving the phone on a shelf.

…

Vegeta was standing in the Gravity Chamber, wiping some sweat off of his face. He had just turned it off when he saw Goku appear next to him, still holding the bottle that had been thrown at him. His shirt was off.

"Owwww, geez that actually hurt." Goku grumbled, rubbing his head.

"Let me guess, you landed in Bulma's bathroom while she was showering?" Vegeta deadpanned. He'd have probably scolded him, but Bulma seemed to have already taken care of that one.

"Yeah, but she didn't have to throw a *shampoo bottle* at me…" Goku pouted a bit. "Well, I guess it is kind of my fault for not calling first."

"So what are you doing here, anyways?" Vegeta asked.

"Oh, yeah, there's something I need to talk with you about if you don't mind. You're not busy, are you?"

"No, it's fine." Vegeta pointed over to his side. "Just sit down over there."

…

"So… Have there been any more updates?" Vegeta inquired simply, as he took a seat next to Goku, drinking from a bottle of water.

"Not yet, but they did have me go in for more questioning again just a little while ago. I had to talk to them about everything that happened, even the way it made me feel." Goku mumbled. "But I couldn't remember everything."

"Try not to worry about it too much. Nobody is expecting you to remember everything. What's important right now is that you answered everything to the best of your abilities." Vegeta reassured him.

"Also… ***that man*** … he messaged me earlier." Goku suddenly said.

"He *what* ?" Vegeta looked at him incredulously. "What did he say?"

"He said that he had gone too far… but I was… *so hot that he couldn't help himself*…" Goku swallowed, with an ashamed expression. "He wanted to take me on a date."

"After what he did-" Vegeta couldn't believe his ears. The idea of using somebody's looks as an excuse to- to *do something like that*. He was *beside himself*. "*Ignore him*. It doesn't *matter* how attractive you are, there was absolutely *no justification whatsoever* for him to put his hands on you when you didn't want him to. He-"

"I responded to him…" Goku interrupted, glaring at the floor. Vegeta's eyes widened when he heard that. He was about to ask him why he even bothered messaging him back, but before he could, Goku continued. "I said that he needed to find somebody that actually *wanted* that from him. I told him that it was partly my fault for not communicating with him better and apologized. But I… I *did* communicate, Vegeta…! I kept *telling* him I wasn't *comfortable* with it, that I didn't think I wanted to *do* that. I even asked to leave over *five times* . But he wouldn't listen, so why? Why do I feel so *guilty* about this…?"

As Goku spoke he started rubbing his hand over his wrist cuff, trying his best to hold back the urge to scratch at his wrist which was itching due to how sore it still was.

Vegeta sighed, seeing it, having an idea of what he was thinking. After a moment, he looked down and grabbed Goku's hand that was starting to reach towards his skin. "You have nothing… to feel guilty *for*... There isn't *anything* you could have *said* that would have changed that bastard's mind. *Not a single thing* ."

"Yeah, but maybe if I had been more clear, then he-" Goku started to argue.

"*No* . I will *not* allow you to take responsibility for the twisted actions of somebody else…" Vegeta said firmly, staring at him with an intense expression, before gazing back down at his arm. Slowly,

he trailed his thumb down Goku's skin over some fresh scratches. They weren't the worst but it still frustrated him to see them. "He wanted your *body, Kakarot* ... for his own satisfaction... He *knew* you were uncomfortable, but he did it anyway…"

"I don't know why it hurts you so much."

Goku bit his lip, suddenly clutching at his head with his free hand as Allan's voice flooded into his mind. "He did… recognize… that I was in pain… but he… didn't know why."

In that moment, it was like he could feel himself being penetrated all over again.

"Calm down, and *listen* to me…" Vegeta said with desperation. "...You don't... need to waste your time trying to understand what he did or *why.* The only thing that matters is that it was wrong. Do you hear me? **It was *wrong***."

"I just wish I… did something to *stop* him." Goku's voice cracked, he couldn't face him.

"Damn it, Kakarot, look at me…" Vegeta reached up and placed a hand on both sides of his face, getting him to look him in the eyes. "You can't keep *finding ways to **blame** yourself* for this, because if you *do*... then you will *never* be able to find the peace - or the happiness - that you *deserve*... Because *This . Was. Not. Your. Fault.* Do you understand what I'm telling you?"

Goku was silent for a moment before nodding.

The truth was he was *still* trying to rationalize it. Trying to find *some way* to fault himself. To take responsibility for what had been done to him.

And yet… deep down, something inside of him almost wanted to believe Vegeta's words to him. It didn't make the pain go away, of course, but just hearing his reassurance provided some limited level of comfort, that he couldn't bring himself to couldn't muster up on his own.

"Good. Now I'm going to go and get some more water. Do you want any?" Vegeta asked, starting to get up.

"Wait," Goku suddenly grabbed his hand to stop him.

"What is it?" Vegeta inquired.

"...After you do that, can I…" Goku swallowed hesitantly, looking at him with uncertainty. "spar with you for a while?"

He had never had a hard time asking this question before, but some part of him was worried that after everything that had happened the other day, he had made things awkward between them somehow and Vegeta wouldn't want to train with him anymore.

"I guess I don't mind, but…" he considered his words for a moment. "Are you sure you're ready to? It's fine if you still need some time. After what happened."

Goku shook his head. "Yeah, I can handle it. I need to let off some steam."

Vegeta studied him for a moment, before giving in. "Very well, but first.. I want you to go and eat a senzu bean. I saw you limping earlier. I can tell you're still in pain…"

Not only that but all the other self-inflicted scratches that were covering his arms were bothering him. Vegeta wanted Goku in peak shape before he fought with him again or none of this would feel right to him.

"I can press through it, though. I don't need it." Goku tried to protest.

"Yes, you *do* ." Vegeta said intensely, refusing to let up on this. "Just… *do what I said*. For me."

Goku finally caved. He couldn't deny Vegeta this request. He laughed nervously. "Well, if you're so insistent about it, I guess I don't really have much of a choice, do I?"

"Hmph." Vegeta smirked. "Just so we're clear, I'm not about to go easy on you once you're healed."

Goku responded in kind. "Good. I wouldn't have it any other way."

…

A/N: Wow, uh, yeah, so… that was a LOT to take in and write for me. So first off thank you so much for all the feed back and kudos. Every positive comment I recieve means more than you could know. Just sharing this part of my life in this story has been exceedingly difficult for me.

From this point on, I'm mostly gonna be focusing on the recovery aspect, and slowly building up to the VegeKaka stuff. I hope somebody enjoyed this because I'm really nervous about it. And, yes, the whole cell phone message thing actually happened, after I reported the guy.

I'm also having a hard time writing Vegeta. He's usually the "tough love" kind of guy, but I want to imagine him being capable of showing more of the "softer" side of him that we don't see a lot in the show itself. I can only hope others are enjoying this take as much as I am because I feel insecure as hell right now.

I have to go back in next week to the court house next week to discuss further info on my trial and prepare more with my prosecuting team so I'm so nervous right now nngggghhhhhhh.

For those who aren't aware, my goal with this story is to explore things like arousal doesn't equal consent and break common stereotypes about rapists that feed into rape culture.

I want to break this notion that all rapists are "violent" per say. Sometimes, rapists are actually less aggressive on the surface level. They put pressure on you and use coercion, they make you feel guilty so it leads you to wonder if you're the one in the wrong or led them on somehow. Even if you asked to leave five times, or specified that you weren't comfortable, you'll still feel to blame like I did. But it's not your fault. As an autistic person who has trouble standing up for myself and doesn't always read social cues, I had to learn this over time on my own, that I wasn't the only one who had been through something like that.

That being said, I do hope nobody will take Goku's trust issues in this chapter as an attack on Vegeta or anybody else, because that wasn't my intentions. For the sake of this story, Goku already has established feelings for him but after what Allan did to him, it's gonna be a bit before he can get to the actual point of being in a relationship with him.

Even for me I still find it hard to trust others to this today. I couldn't even trust my own family for a while after it happened and have nightmares sometimes. Trauma is crazy and i haven't even had a therapist since then so huge fat joy there. But I am trying to work on it.

Lastly, my memories from my time in the hospital and some of the following days are very hazy because it was back in 2021. Because of that some descriptions are vague because I can't even remember them well myself.

Gonna be honest, though, I'm not all that happy with how this chapter turned out just because of how bad my memory was, so I may yet delete and reupload at some point or delete all together, still not sure if I want to keep this story up, unless people are really that insistent on me keeping it up, I just feel so insecure right now haha. :'(

Rest

Story: Even The Strongest, Chapter 4

A/N: I have to go to trial on Monday, so I'm super nervous right now. Realizing I can't write fight scenes for the life of me, but I tried my best ahhhh I hoped somebody enjoys this ashyvdbdbxn

EDIT: I have changed and removed stuff for this chapter just because I thought it flowed better.

But looking back now this chapter is still not as good as it could have been.

...

Goku and Vegeta had been sparring for a couple hours now, exchanging blow after blow, kick after kick. Their clothes were in tatters and both of their bodies had become littered with bruises and injuries, but they didn't mind it. The feeling was *intoxicating* for them.

It was only in moments like these that the two truly felt *alive* , because when it came down to it, this was a central part of who they *were* .

They were two Saiyan warriors, in their prime, fighting for the thrill of the battle, and for the sake of getting stronger.

Goku was ecstatic right now and Vegeta could tell. Seeing the other man so excited and pumped up for the first time in days made Vegeta truly *happy* for some reason.

"You're really enjoying this, *aren't* you, Kakarot?" An amused smirk spread across his lips as he soaked up some sweat from his brow with his glove.

"Can you blame me? I haven't had a good fight like this in a *while* ." Goku responded in kind. He and Vegeta then came at each other again, but this time, instead of their usual flurry of blows, they launched one powerful punch at each other, their knuckles suddenly colliding in a battle for supremacy.

What Goku liked so much about sparring with Vegeta was that he never had to pull his punches with him. Above that, Vegeta could actually both understand him as another Saiyan warrior and *match* him.

Not just that, but this was *him*, the person Goku was in *love* with. He never really even had this sort of chance with *Chichi* because he had always been too afraid of hurting her if they were to actually have a fight.

Ironically enough, however, him and Vegeta were complete opposites in everything they did, even their battle styles. That's why sparring with one another in particular provided such a challenge, because each one had what the other one lacked and vice versa. It pushed them both to realize their weaknesses and exactly what they needed to work on to achieve even greater heights, to become *stronger* .

"Is that so? Well then, I'll just have to make sure to keep this *entertaining* for you, *won't I...* ?" Vegeta said before sending a new barrage of punches towards Goku. "The truth is I'm having fun with this *as well."*

And he *was* . Vegeta, just like Goku, could appreciate being able to just let loose and fully immerse himself into battle. But the fact he was able to *share* this with somebody *, especially Kakarot,* gave him a feeling of bliss like none he had ever experienced before. He was just as grateful to have the pleasure of experiencing this right now as *Goku* was.

"Really? Glad to hear it!" Goku smiled.

Despite blocking Vegeta's strikes to the best of his abilities, several of them landed, creating bruises. At some point, however, Goku spotted an opening and struck him in the ribs.

Vegeta coughed up blood, stumbling back and clutching at his stomach in response. Goku immediately lunged towards him, sending a barrage of his own punches his way. Vegeta shielded the side of his face to defend himself from one particularly aggressive attack, his eyes darting around, and keeping an eye on everything Goku was doing. His movements were becoming stiffer than usual, Goku could see it. Finally, Vegeta attempted to swing his fist up at Goku's face, but before he could hit, the other Saiyan deftly stepped aside and attempted to counter with a punch of his own.

Vegeta just *barely* managed to catch the force of the impact within his palm, before kneeing him in the stomach. He wrapped his fingers tightly around his fist, before quickly sending him flying back into a tree with another kick.

The tree crashed to the ground, creating a cloud of dust in its wake.

Goku was fast to recover, his blood pumping in his veins, craving even *more* as he advanced towards him once again. In that moment, he started to spam Vegeta with more punches, who was shielding himself to the best of his ability. Unfortunately, however, Goku was only able to fend it off for so long. At some point one of Vegeta's fists came crashing straight into his nose.

Vegeta fell back, and held his face in pain. He was so distracted that he didn't have time to react before Goku suddenly came behind him with a smirk, locking his arms in his own.

Vegeta immediately head-butted Goku in the chin, forcing him to let go. He swiftly jumped back, on the offensive.

In that moment, he then began to bombard him with attack after attack almost too fast for him to Goku's eye to even follow or keep up with. The sheer force of each strike was *incredible* , but still, Goku kept managing to keep blocking every single one. That was until some point when Vegeta suddenly landed a vicious kick to his gut.

Goku almost instantly grabbed his leg, swinging him around into the air before he threw him off to the side.

Vegeta crashed into the ground, a large crater forming in the dirt beneath him. Goku ran over and attempted to get the drop on him, but right before his fist could make contact with Vegeta, Vegeta managed to jump out of the way at the last second. When Goku's fist missed its target and met the ground, the hole beneath them grew even larger.

Finally regaining his footing, Vegeta stood back with a defensive pose, trying to gather his breath and just observe him for the time being.

Goku slowly got up, wiping away blood and dirt from his cheek, taking a moment to reevaluate the situation.

Deciding to just go for it, Goku tackled Vegeta out of nowhere, grappling him. After a few minutes of scuffling around on the ground, Goku had seemed to win the tussle, pinning Vegeta down by holding an elbow to his chest.

Vegeta's eyes widened slightly at seeing their faces were barely over an inch apart. His face heated up and his heart began to loudly pound in his chest.

Too close too ***close tooclose***

Goku chuckled, smirking down at him. He was too hyped up about the fight to even realize how close they actually were or that Vegeta was embarrassed.

That was until a moment later when he saw Vegeta was no longer attempting to fight him back. He didn't know why he had stopped, but he could tell that something was off.

"Vegeta? Hey, what's-" He started to ask.

"It's nothing, Kakarot. Get off of me..." Vegeta hissed in a low voice, cutting him off.

Goku frowned a bit, but pulled away and released his hold on him as requested.

"Oh, sorry...! Was I really hurting you that bad? I didn't... mean to." He apologized, completely misunderstanding the situation.

"No, you weren't... hurting me... But I would prefer it if you actually *attacked* me next time, instead of just... *holding* me there, alright?" Vegeta muttered, awkwardly. "People might... get the wrong idea."

"The wrong idea about *what* ? We were just sparring, right? I'm confused, did I do something wrong?" Goku asked, looking a little guilty.

Vegeta's heart yearned to tell him the truth, but he knew he couldn't. It wasn't the time. After what Goku had been through, it might *never* be the time, and he was *prepared* for that.

"I said it's nothing, so hurry up and fight me!" He snapped, once again lunging at him.

Goku dodged the attack, before catching his hand. He looked into his eyes with a great intensity, his expression becoming serious. "I'm *serious, Vegeta*. Did I... do something... to make you angry...?"

"What? No, why would you even *think* that?" Vegeta asked incredulously, not having intended to send out such an impression at all.

"Because you suddenly started acting weird a moment ago. If I did something that upset you somehow, I want to know so I can fix it." Goku insisted.

Vegeta avoided his gaze awkwardly, attempting to pull his hand out of his grip. "Look, I'm not *mad* at you. I just want to train. So stop worrying already, you clown."

"Well, if you say so... As long as you're sure about it, I guess I don't need to worry about holding back again. Let's continue, *shall* we?" Goku smiled, before sending a punch directly into Vegeta's solar plexus, causing him to bend over in pain.

"Heh, you jerk, I get the feeling you *planned* that attack." Vegeta conceded, grabbing the bruised area with a bitter laugh. He wasn't *about* to let that hit just *slide* . No, he had to get back at him, and he'd do just that. "Well, no matter, let's see if you can handle *this* !"

Using a ki blast, he blasted the man's arm without much of a warning. "There, now we're *even* ."

"Hey, no fair, this is supposed to be hand-to-hand combat, no ki attacks allowed!" Goku pouted, clutching his arm and jumping back.

"Yeah, well, I'm changing the rules, so take it or leave it, Kakarot!" Vegeta blasted towards him again.

"Fine, if that's how you want to do it, then why don't we just go *all out* instead?" Goku dodged out of the way, turning Super Saiyan Blue in an instant.

"Straight to blue, huh? Very well, if you insist, then I'll *gladly* oblige." Vegeta followed in tow, his aura becoming blue as well. "Bring it on!"

...

Eventually, Vegeta found himself starting to become exhausted, and so did Goku.

Goku caught one of Vegeta's fists, deflecting his attack and kicking him back once more. He narrowed his eyes, sensing that this was the exact moment he needed to take advantage of, and he did just that. He charged at Vegeta, slamming his shoulder into his stomach.

Vegeta doubled over, yelling out in pain, but before Goku could attack him again, he dodged out of the way at the last second, swiftly delivering an uppercut straight into Goku's chin, sending him crashing into the dirt behind him.

Goku felt as though the wind had been knocked out of him. For a long moment, he couldn't even move, as he was more focused on regaining his breath.

In that instant, Vegeta saw his chance. This was it. He quickly jumped on top of Goku, roughly grabbing him by his hair.

"Thi-" He prepared a fist, but immediately stopped himself when he saw the shift in expression on Goku's face.

There was pure unbridled *fear* , but it wasn't directed at *Vegeta* , it was directed *past* him, like he was seeing somebody else entirely.

Goku had completely froze up, reverting to base form. All he could see and feel in that moment was ***that man*** . He couldn't speak. He couldn't even breathe. Tears clung to the corners of his eyes.

"...Kakarot?" Vegeta inquired for a response.

After about thirty seconds it dawned on him what was going on, and he was forced to remember Goku's situation.

"Kakarot... Hey... *Shit.* "

He's not responding. ***What should I do?***

Is it... Is this ***my fault*** *? I didn't mean to scare him like* ***this*** *...*

Damn it all...

It was ironic, Vegeta had never ***once*** been the type of person to shy away from exploiting the weaknesses or sore spots of his opponents to gain an upper hand in battle, but somehow... this just felt *wrong* to him, and *vile* . Like something *Frieza* would do. If he took his hit now, it would weigh on both him *and* his pride as a warrior. It wouldn't be the kind of victory he *wanted* .

Vegeta took a deep breath, before slowly releasing Goku's hair and eventually let go of it altogether.

He then got off of him, moving to his side instead, and after a moment, Goku seemed to relax somewhat, but still wasn't entirely all there.

Within a split second, Vegeta's demeanor changed entirely, from one of a battle-hardened Saiyan to one of simple *love and concern*.

He reached up and gently caressed his face.

"It's ***him***... You're *seeing* him again, aren't you...? *Feeling* him..." He said it quietly at first, as if he didn't want the rest of the world to hear it. Such words could only be spoken by somebody who truly understood exactly what he was going through. "Did I... do something... to remind you of it...? I'm sorry, whatever it is, I won't... do it again... Just *please... talk* to me."

He spoke, as if he were walking on eggshells. He didn't want to treat Goku like he was a damsel in distress, because he *wasn't* . Goku was fully capable of fighting and defending himself in battle, but right now, he was suffering, he had just been *traumatized* , and Vegeta didn't want to tread on that.

It was a ***mistake*** *for me to agree to spar with him. It's only been three days since then.*

This sort of thing was another reason he had suggested at least a few weeks before they had Whis come back to train them more. Because Goku needed *time*, to at least have a chance to *somewhat process* what had happened.

Goku was quiet for a moment before speaking back up. "...The other day... When he... made me suck his..."

"His dick...?" Vegeta tentatively finished the sentence, in a soft tone of voice, knowing that Goku probably felt disgusted even *saying the word* considering the circumstances.

"Y...yeah, he... pulled my hair..." Goku confirmed in a low and strained voice. "So when you... grabbed me.... It reminded me of that... I'm sorry... I overreacted again..."

"*No,* don'*t* apologize for this." Vegeta shook his head vehemently, tightly embracing him. "It's not your fault. If anyone should be sorry right now, it's me. I should have been more *careful...* "

"Vegeta, no, I don't want you *coddling* me. There's no *way* you could have known. *I* didn't even expect it to happen..." Goku insisted, a tired look in his eyes. He was trying his hardest to regain his

composure but failing miserably. Still, Vegeta's hug - his warmth - it felt so nice to him, the one thing keeping him from breaking down all together in that moment. He felt *safe* .

Keeping him in his arms, Vegeta was quiet for a moment, taking stock of the other man's condition. Despite calming down some, Goku was still shaking, and his breathing was erratic. He seemed like he had had enough for the day - the stress was clearly too much for him to deal with right now.

"Let's stop this..." Vegeta conceded, letting out a small sigh as he turned back to his base form. "I refuse to hurt you any further when you're like this..."

"It's fine. I can keep going. Just give me a minute to calm down a bit." Goku immediately insisted, feeling as though he had just been *insulted* . He may not be as prideful as Vegeta about some things, but he still didn't like being *patronized* in the middle of a fight. He couldn't *stand* this.

Despite what Goku said, however, Vegeta could tell that he wasn't in a proper mental state to continue sparring with him right now, no matter *what* he tried to say. It wasn't a matter of doubting of Goku's abilities or looking down on him. It was because he *cared* about him. As it was now, Vegeta could tell that Goku was too tense to continue sparring.

"Absolutely *not.* You've already been through *enough*. This ends *right here* and that's *final*." Vegeta said with a serious expression. "For now, we are going to go back to Capsule Corp, and *you* are going to take some time to *relax* - and **rest** if you need to. *Only then* will we talk about more sparring. Got it...?"

For a long time, Goku said nothing, his eyes glued to the ground beneath him. Finally, he caved, knowing Vegeta wasn't going to take no for an answer on this. "...Okay."

He didn't want to, but some part of him knew that Vegeta was right. He felt *exhausted* after that, and not just *physically* .

"Good. Here, eat this." Vegeta held a Senzu bean up to his mouth, having taken the ones that Goku got from Korin and stored them in his uniform.

After a moment, Goku bit down and swallowed it.

All of his injuries were soon gone, but Vegeta still wasn't able to find relief.

...

In the end, it was Bulma who Goku and Vegeta teleported to. She was startled at first, but some part of her was relieved to see them.

"Oh, Goku, there you are, I was just looking for you." She said, holding out his phone. "I finally got your number changed."

"Oh, thanks a lot, Bulma." Goku smiled, taking the phone. He frowned a bit when he saw the expression on her face. She looked worried. "What's wrong?"

"It's... If you don't mind me asking..." She paused, feeling as though she was treading onto a sensitive topic area, but wanted to ask him about it anyways. "What were those messages on your phone about? That *Allan* , I mean, who is he? Is he the one you said you didn't want messaging you again? Just what happened between you two?"

She hadn't intended to see them, but when testing to make sure the number was working properly, she had come across Goku's recent message to him and it worried her, even furthermore when she skimmed over the other messages that Allan had sent, the implications were so obvious it was painful.

The simple mention of the name was enough to cause Goku to tense up. He fidgeted with his gi, nervously. *She saw them. What if she knows? I should have just deleted them.*

Vegeta could tell he was on edge. He knew about the messages, but he wouldn't speak about them nor would he intervene unless that's what Goku wanted. A certain part of him wanted to scold Bulma for her invasion of Goku's privacy but knowing the gravity of this whole situation made it nearly impossible. In the end, she was just worried about him, rightfully so.

What was the appropriate way to respond in a situation like this?

"It's nothing. I'd rather not... talk about it." Goku said, dismissively, avoiding her gaze entirely.

Bulma only became more concerned after that.

"Are you sure? They look like... you were being... sexually harassed by him. Did he... *do* something to you...?" She asked with hesitation. "Is *that* why you had me change your number?"

Her assumption was surprisingly spot on. So much so that Goku immediately lowered his head in shame.

Bulma was his oldest friend, so while her just seeing the messages was bad enough, knowing that she already had an idea of what had happened was *humiliating* .

He felt furious that he had let himself get into such a stupid situation in the first place, and some part of him wanted to deny it all together; wanted to shout out loud to her that it didn't happen like that, but it was too late now. She *knew* .

"I..." Goku bit his lip before giving in. He bowed his head, looking ashamed. "Yeah, but don't tell anybody else, okay...? Aside from Vegeta, only a few others know about it. If possible, I'd prefer to keep it that way."

"Don't worry, I won't tell anybody, but..." Bulma was quiet for a moment. It had only been a suspicion, but with it confirmed, she felt the need to press the matter. "Exactly... What did he do to you? You don't... have to say if don't want to, but-"

Vegeta had his arms crossed, wanting to tell her to back off on the questions since Goku had already said once that he didn't want to talk about it. However, before he had a chance to speak, Goku beat him to it, answering her question.

"He raped me... A few days ago..." Goku forced it out if only just to get it over with. It honestly seemed like the more he was asked to talk about it, the harder it got to do so. And as more people found out, the dirtier and more vulnerable he *felt* .

Bulma gasped at hearing the words out loud. Her eyes widened at the realization. She covered her mouth, shocked at the information. She was speechless for a moment as she let it sink in. "Oh my god... Goku, I... *I'm so sorry* ."

She assumed Allan might have courted him or made him uncomfortable somehow, but this? She wanted to cry, or scream or throw down her lab coat in frustration, *choke somebody* . Nobody, *not even her worst enemy* , deserved that.

*How **dare** somebody hurt Goku like that?! Or **anybody** , for that matter?! How **could** he?*

She looked over at Vegeta, who had a pain-filled, but knowing expression on his face. In a split second, she put two and two together. Before Goku could even respond, she asked another question. "Vegeta, did you... Did you *know* about this as well...? Is that why you've been acting so strange these past few days...?"

"I..." Vegeta gazed away, opening his mouth to speak, trying to formulate a response.

In the end, it was Goku who spoke.

"Yeah, Vegeta is the first person I told about it... right after it happened." He said in a low voice. "He probably didn't mention it because he didn't want to worry you..."

"So did you... *report* him, then? The one who did that to you." Bulma desperately wanted to know, hundreds of emotions swarming in her head. Even though some part of her understood Vegeta's reason for not saying anything about this before now, it still hurt that she was only just *now* finding out about this.

"Mhm," Goku affirmed, in a low voice. "Vegeta went with me... to the police station. We reported it to Krillin. A couple detectives just had me go in for more questioning this morning. I think they said they needed a warrant or something first before they could arrest him, so..."

Bulma gazed at him with a face of defeat. No matter how much it frustrated her admitting it, she knew that justice wouldn't happen overnight. In times like this, she needed to keep her cool, especially in front of Goku, who was already going through enough as it was.

"I see..." She took a moment of silence, forcing herself to calm down, as she wiped away some tears that had formed in her eyes. "Well, I'm always here for you, okay?" Bulma placed a hand on both of his shoulders with a small smile.

"Yeah, thanks, Bulma..." Goku said meekly, his tone hinting that he didn't want to bother her with it. He was becoming a tad nervous about the contact to his shoulders.

"I *mean* it, Goku." Bulma asserted her sincerity, a serious look in her eyes. "If you ever need *anything* during this, don't even hesitate for a second to ask me. I promise I'll do everything in my power to help you. Hell, I could even hook you up with a good attorney and help you sue the crap out of him if you'd like."

Goku was quiet for a moment, as he heard her words. He gazed away, unable to look her in the eyes. "I really appreciate the offer, but I'm not... all that interested in getting any zeni out of this. All I want right now is for him to be put in jail, so I won't have to worry about seeing him again for a *while* ."

"I figured you'd say that..." Bulma gave a sad smirk when he turned down her offer. "You've always been that way, ever since you were a child. Still, just in case you change your mind, you know where you can find me. Just call me next time instead of appearing before me while I'm *showering* ."

"Yeah, sorry about that. I guess I keep forgetting to use my phone." Goku laughed awkwardly, scratching the back of his head. "I was so stressed out earlier from having to answer their questions that I didn't really think to ask first..."

"Don't worry, I'm not *too* upset."

Bulma smiled, lightheartedly. "I understand fully well how nerve-wracking this whole process can *be* sometimes. Still... If you ever want to talk about it, you could just hit me up with a text or something. Believe it or not, writing about it can sometimes be a lot easier than talking about it out loud because you have more time to formulate your responses. Plus..."

Bulma gave a mischievous smirk, leaning in close to the taller man's ear.

Vegeta secretly found himself eyeing them, making sure she didn't get too close to Goku, for *multiple* reasons. He couldn't help but feel like she was up to something. He couldn't have possibly imagined *what* .

"Didn't you know?" Bulma asked, barely loud enough for him to hear. "Even *Vegeta* has a phone. Maybe you could try sending *him* a text some time. He might not say a lot, but I can assure you he *does* at least *read* them."

Vegeta blushed a bit when Goku glanced over at him with an accusative stare.

"Wait, is that *true* ? How come you never told me you had a phone, Vegeta?" Goku asked, pouting a bit. "You could have given me your number..."

"Hey, it's not like you asked me about it or anything..." Vegeta muttered, awkwardly. "How was I supposed to know you wanted my number when you can just use your instant transmission to find me or whatever...? Besides, I just assumed you wouldn't care much about that sort of thing..."

"I don't... not really, but still... I would have at least liked to have your number just in case..." Goku fidgeted a bit, suddenly feeling bashful for some reason.

Vegeta wasn't even able to look at Goku's shy expression for thirty seconds before he caved, unable to deny him his request.

"Alright, *fine... Give me that.* " Vegeta's face heated up as he reached out and grabbed the other man's phone. He flipped on the screen and went to the contacts list. "If I add my number to your contacts, will you stop bugging me about it...?"

"Yeah, of course. Thank you, Vegeta..." Goku grinned, feeling overly excited for some reason by the simple offer.

"Tch, whatever, you clown..." Vegeta grumbled, yet he actually wasn't all that annoyed. Honestly, he was *glad* that Goku had asked for his number, because he himself probably wouldn't have had the courage to do so otherwise. Rather, his pride wouldn't have *allowed* him to. "Here."

He handed Goku's phone back to him, turning his face away.

Bulma observed them with some amusement. She had had her suspicions Vegeta had been developing feelings for Goku for a while, and even vise versa, but she had never really confronted either one of them about it before.

Of course, after everything Goku had been through over these past few days, it didn't even seem *right* to focus much on that, but still watching Vegeta get so flustered around the other Saiyan was so *sweet* somehow.

Soon, she reverted her attention back to Goku, changing the subject.

"You know, I'm really impressed that you actually decided to tell somebody about what that guy did to you, Goku, let alone *report* it." She noted, complimenting him for his bravery. "Not a lot of people would have the courage to do that."

"To be honest, I didn't even *want* to at first. I was afraid that they would blame me for it or something. But Vegeta ended up making a pretty convincing argument and refused to drop it until I finally agreed to do something about it." Goku explained, nervously.

"Oh, *did* he now?" Bulma looked over at Vegeta with a curious and *knowing* expression.

"Hmph, *please* ." Vegeta scoffed, suddenly hugging against the other Saiyan's arm, almost defensively. Goku looked down at him, blushing ever so slightly at the gesture before Vegeta continued. "If I had *my* choice, that bastard wouldn't even be *alive* right now, but *this* idiot just had to go and choose *mercy* ..."

"Vegeta, don't say it like that..." Goku pouted a bit. "I want him to go to jail, not *kill* him..."

"Tch." Vegeta huffed in response, giving in. "Well, whatever... As long as he can't hurt you again, I guess that's all that matters to me..."

"Wow, Vegeta, you like to play the tough guy act, but you actually care a lot for him, *don't* you...?" Bulma teased, with a sly smirk.

"I... what-" Vegeta blushed profusely, unable to even formulate a proper response at first. Not that he could hide it. He had made it abundantly clear to Goku himself on several occasions over the past few days. He looked down towards Goku's arm, avoiding her gaze, as if he were *shy* about it or something. "Well, of *course* I do..."

His voice was low, a bit strained even. Bulma and Goku were the only two people in his life who had *ever* managed to get these kinds of rises out of him. He couldn't stand it, being teased like this, but so long as Goku never brought up the *as your prince* comment which he had blurted out at on pure emotion at the time, he would be fine. If Bulma found out about *that one,* there was *no way* she'd let him live it down.

Goku silently listened to their conversation, feeling a bit weird since they were talking about him. However, when he heard Vegeta's words, and saw the look on his face, a small warmth entered his chest.

Vegeta is so cute when he blushes...

"Trust me, I can *tell* ." Bulma smirked at Vegeta. "So take care of him for me, will you? I'm sure you're aware by now, but I've known Goku since he was a little boy, so he's really special to me. I just don't want to see him get hurt again."

"You didn't need to ask, I already decided from the start that I would help him through this *regardless* if anybody else told me to or *not* ." Vegeta unashamedly vowed with a surprising amount

of devotion in his tone. Slowly, he started pulling Goku towards the door. "Anyways, we're leaving now. Kakarot, come on."

"Oh, okay..." Goku said, somewhat sheepishly as he allowed himself to be led off by Vegeta, scratching his head a bit. "Bye, Bulma."

As Bulma waved at the two, Vegeta reflected on her words to him about looking after Goku.

Why does everybody keep saying that to me...? It's not like I wasn't already planning to look after him, but...

Once they were out of the room, Goku turned to look back down at Vegeta who was still holding onto his arm. His words had touched Goku, but at the same time, he couldn't help but felt bad for some reason...

Vegeta's been putting himself through so much for me lately, yet all I've been doing these past few days is causing him more trouble than ever.

What if he starts to get tired of it? Of me? I know I can be a lot, but I wouldn't want him to actually hate me...

Am I... being selfish... for relying on him?

"What's wrong? Something on your mind?" Vegeta asked, a hint of concern in his voice when he noticed the expression on Goku's face.

"No, it's nothing. Don't worry about it." Goku mumbled dismissively, but Vegeta could tell he was lying.

Vegeta scowled a bit, but decided it was best to not probe for the time being.

...

In the end, Vegeta led Goku to sit in his bedroom, which had a bathroom attached to it. It wasn't intended as anything strange. Over the past few months, in fact, Goku had appeared here using his instant transmission on *multiple* occasions, just to hang out and bug him about any possible thing, usually to distance himself from his arguments with Chichi.

At first, it had somewhat annoyed Vegeta, who liked and wanted his personal space, especially after he and Bulma had split up, but somehow, he had quickly started to grow fond of and even look forward to the other Saiyan's company more than he ever had before.

Similarly, he too had eventually started to get the sense that Goku had grown somewhat lonely as well following his own divorce. Understanding what he must have been going through, Vegeta was never able to bring himself to out right push the other Saiyan away. Vegeta didn't always comment but he would listen, occasionally making comments here and there. Goku especially talked about basically anything that popped into his head, even stuff going on with Gohan and Piccolo and King Kai.

That was why Vegeta had seen no issue with bringing Goku here *today* because he thought it would help him relax just like any other. That it would be seen as a safe space where Goku could just *talk* to him again without other people bothering him.

However, what *didn't* dawn on him at first was the fact that this was the first time Goku had been here since before being *assaulted* , an event which had just so happened to take place in *another man's bedroom* .

"I want you to stay here for a moment." Vegeta said, still standing at the door, looking back at him. "I'm going to get you some water."

"Okay..." Goku replied anxiously, suddenly bouncing his leg. He had his head tilted downward, his hair partly covering his eyes. A sense of foreboding creeped up on him, and even though he tried to refamiliarize himself by sitting down on Vegeta's bed, it didn't help much.

A frown formed on Vegeta's face when he saw that. It gripped at his chest, filling him with uncertainty.

Is it really a good idea to leave him alone like this?

Whatever, it's not like I'm leaving for an hour or anything. It's only a few minutes. He should be fine.

With that thought in mind, Vegeta exited the room and closed the door behind him, then heading towards the kitchen.

Goku continued to sit on Vegeta's bed, trying to fight off the intrusive thoughts that were currently running through his head.

*Why is it so hard to just **relax...** ?*

*I've **been** here before, so I shouldn't be feeling this way.*

*This is supposed to be **normal** .*

*Vegeta and I are just friends, he wouldn't **do** what **that man** did.*

*So **why** then?*

Why are these memories bothering me so much right now?

I can't stand this.

*I need to calm down. **Breathe.***

Curling in on himself and desperate to calm his nerves, Goku laid down on his side, barely resisting the urge to claw into his skin. The mattress beneath him was soft and the sheets were cool to the touch. It was somewhat stimulating at the very least. But it still wasn't-

Right as his thoughts started going into a darker territory, a cold bottle of water was pressed to his cheek as he felt weight dip into the bed from the other side.

"Drink this. It might help you feel better." Vegeta had just sat down next to him, drinking from a water bottle of his own while offering him another.

"Oh, thanks." Goku took it, but didn't make an effort to open it.

Vegeta frowned once again, an uncomfortable silence settling between them. He leaned his elbow down on the bed, resting his cheek in the palm of his hand so he was facing Goku. "Kakarot... Are you... sure you're okay? You're not usually this quiet..."

"Sorry, I'm just... really nervous right now." Goku mumbled, sheepishly.

"*Nervous...* ? *Why* ? This wouldn't happen to have anything to do with something Bulma said, would it...? Or what happened earlier?" Vegeta took a wild guess, knowing he had to start *somewhere* .

"No .. . Not really, anyway." Goku replied vaguely. While that *had* helped wire him up *more* , it wasn't the direct cause of why he was this nervous right now.

"Then what is it...?" Vegeta tried to probe for any answer he could get. "You can tell me."

"...It's just... being in somebody else's bedroom like this... It reminds me of *him*..." Goku finally admitted.

Vegeta immediately felt his heart ache when it dawned on him, remembering that Goku had also seemed upset on the day of the assault when resting in his bedroom was suggested.

So that was why.

"Oh..." He uttered, barely above a whisper. "I... I'm sorry... *Shit* , I didn't even *consider* that. Do you want to leave? We don't... have to stay here if you don't want to."

"No, it's fine..." Goku reassured him. "I know you only brought me here because you thought it might help me calm down some."

"Yeah, but if you don't even feel *safe* here, then what's the point...? I just want what's best for *you* ." Vegeta expressed doubtedly.

"Vegeta, please... *Believe me,* There's no other place I'd *rather* be than with you... I'll admit it's true that I'm scared. But still... I want... to trust you." Goku insisted, his cheeks turning a slight shade of red as he said that.

Vegeta felt warmth rise to his own face at seeing that.

"Well... Just let me know if you change your mind, alright...?" He encouraged him tentatively.

"Okay..." Goku replied simply. After a long moment, he spoke back up, avoiding Vegeta's gaze with a look of shame in his eyes. "I'm sure you must be disappointed in me right now... For what happened earlier."

"What? Kakarot, I..." Vegeta was silent for a moment, trying to process what he had just said. "No, I'm not... *disappointed* in you, okay...? That... wasn't your fault."

"I know, but still... It *frustrates* me... I can't believe I just *froze up* like that." Goku muttered, as he tightened his hand over the water bottle causing it to crinkle under his grip. "I feel so *weak* right now.

"You're *not* weak...! Listen to me." Vegeta all but snapped. He hesitantly reached out and caressed the other man's cheek in a gentle manner. "You just need to give yourself some more time to

process this ... "

"I should have been able to hold out *longer*... " Goku muttered, bitter tears forming in his eyes as he grew more and more agitated at himself by the second. "I should have..."

"No, Stop being so hard on yourself..." Vegeta scolded. "These sorts of setbacks are almost *bound* to happen when you're... dealing with something *traumatic* like this. There will *always* be things that trigger you from time to time and that's okay, it's ***normal...*** If you want the truth, I'm honestly impressed that you lasted as long as you *did*... "

"But still, you had to cut our match *short* because of me-" Goku tried to argue back.

"To *hell* with our match." Vegeta all but growled. "The only thing that matters to me right now is *you*... and making sure that *you* get *better* . For now, I just want you to relax, and rest for a while..."

"I don't want to *rest*... I need to get my mind off of it." Goku was starting to become upset and Vegeta could see it. "*Please* , you're the only person I can truly *trust* with this."

"Kakarot, I..." Vegeta paused a moment, trying to figure out a way to handle this with caution. "I have no... *problem* with sparring with you, as much as you need me to, but you also need to realize that your usual methods of *dealing with things* ... aren't always going to be an *option*. You saw that for yourself *earlier* ..."

"Then what am I *supposed* to do? Training and fighting are *all I have left* ." Goku said, with tears in his eyes.

"Well..." After a moment, Vegeta let out a breath he didn't know he had been holding in. He then reached over and yet again found himself running his gloved fingers through the other man's gravity-defying hair, watching as it bounced. "You also have *me*, don't you...? So why don't you try... talking about it...?"

For a long moment, Goku wordlessly stared into Vegeta's eyes, then looked back down at the water bottle he was holding.

"Can you... hold me?" He asked, once again.

"I-What?" Vegeta was completely startled by the sudden request, simply because of how *random* it was. His heart pounded in his chest, trying to process it.

"...Hug me... You don't... mind, do you...?" Goku asked, suddenly feeling insecure.

"No, I don't... *mind*." Vegeta clarified . "You just... surprised me, is all..."

Slowly, he moved over closer to Goku, softly wrapping his left arm around his torso, and rested his right arm under Goku's head. He used a pillow to pillow to cushion his own head.

"How's this...?" He asked awkwardly, pulling him towards himself somewhat, careful not to squeeze too tight.

"...Feels nice." Goku breathed softly. He leaned against Vegeta's chest, closing his eyes as he let himself get comfortable, melting into the other Saiyan's warmth. It was relaxing, and if only for a while, helped ease the pain in his heart and distract him from the thoughts that had been eating away at him for the past few days and even months.

"Is that so? Well, I'm glad..." Vegeta titled his head down slightly so he could rest his chin above Goku's head. Goku's frame was larger than his but this still felt... *right* to him somehow. Quietly, he focused on the rising and falling of Goku's shoulders. It was just a hug, but the thought of somebody else having this closeness with Kakarot caused a small flare of jealousy to blaze within him, and he drew the Saiyan closer.

And yet.... What actually *enraged* him was the fact that such a pitiful excuse for a man as Allan *existed* ; somebody who could do something so disgusting to somebody *so... pure-hearted* without even getting explicit *consent.*

Vegeta wasn't by any means a saint, and nor was he claiming to be. He had committed so many atrocities in his lifetime that he could never even *hope* to atone for, such as the things he had done on Nemek and many other places. However, in all his years, *rape* was the one line he absolutely refused to cross under *any* circumstance. It was just *depraved* .

Of course maybe his reason for being so *disgusted* by it *was... personal* - a humiliating part of his own past he had never spoken of to anybody before - but even if he *didn't* have a reason, he *still* wouldn't cross such a line, not for the sake of *breeding,* as Nappa had once suggested, *nor* for *pleasure* or ***control***.

Hugging Goku securely in his arms, he affectionately continued to stroke his hair, occasionally running a hand down his back. Slowly, he felt some sort of protective instinct rising inside of him, silently vowing to do whatever he had to to ensure that Goku never had to go through anything like this again.

He didn't know if Goku wanted to talk as he had offered him to but, if not, he would continue to stay with him as long as the other Saiyan needed him to.

Goku was quiet for a long moment before speaking.

"Heh, it probably seems strange, but fighting... I guess it kinda helps me cope with stuff or something." He explained in a tired voice, stating what had already been gathered by both of them at this point. "Without it, I start to get anxious and I don't function well..."

"That's not strange at all, believe me... I'm the same way." Vegeta mumbled.

"Still, if I were different, then maybe Chichi and me wouldn't have..." Goku started going off onto an uncharacteristically dark tangent.

"No, don't you even think about finishing that line." Vegeta immediately cut him off. "Look at me right now, Kakarot ."

Slowly, Goku moved his face up to look at him, hesitantly meeting his gaze.

Gently, Vegeta cupped his left hand over his cheek to make sure he didn't turn away again.

"You are perfect just the way you are, do you hear me? Sure, you may have made some mistakes, but all of us have. And stop holding yourself to the standards of humans already, because you're *not* one. You're a *Saiyan*." Vegeta said, his words practically hitting the other man like a sledgehammer. "Earth may be your home, this may be the place where you were raised and grew up. But the Saiyan blood flowing through your veins? That will always be a part of you, and not a *single*

person has a right to make you feel guilty for that, not even yourself. You should be proud of who you are."

Goku took another long pause, taking in his words of encouragement. He soon moved his head back down to rest against his chest.

"It's just... so hard sometimes..." he said, his voice trembling. "First there was the divorce with her and now this...? After what he did to me, I just... I can't... take it anymore... I feel like my entire world is falling apart..."

"I know it's hard... but you've got to fight it. You can't let this trauma define you... Any of it." Vegeta embraced him once more.

"Do you... really think that man will be arrested? I mean... What if there wasn't enough evidence? Or what if they still try to say I wanted it? What if-" Goku realized he had been changing the conversations right and left but he couldn't help it. He had so many things that had been going through his mind and was stressed out. He felt like he was going to explode.

"Hey, *calm down* ." Vegeta could sense that he was becoming frantic, getting himself worked up. "All of this is going to work out. I told you that before, didn't I...?"

"Yeah, but what if it *doesn't* ?" Goku looked up at him with tears in his eyes. "What if he-"

"It *will*. *Believe me*. Krillin and the police department will ensure that it *does*. And even if *they* ***can't***. I ***will***. I swear to you that after this is over - one way or *another* - you will never have to see that bastard's face ***ever again***." Vegeta almost growled. The look on his face spoke a thousand words.

"I just... I want these memories to *go away.* I can still *feel him inside of me*..." Goku choked out.

He what-

A look of pure horror passed over Vegeta's face as he heard those words, almost feeling like his heart had just been ripped straight out of his chest. He stared down at Goku, biting the inside of his lip to stop himself from crying. He squeezed his hand to stop him from once again reaching out for the new self-inflicted wound he had just created - firmly, as if for dear life.

"He's *gone, Kakarot*..." he said with pain in his voice.

"I know... but this memory... It feels so real, as if it's still happening to me, even though it's not... It's like I'm still reliving it. I want it to stop." Goku quivered. "When he penetrated me... He told me... that I was the perfect fit. I was *tight*. That my body... was made for him... I feel so dirty right now."

Vegeta was on the verge of breaking down in tears at hearing that. He held him close to his chest.

"You're not dirty. Don't think that..." Once again, he wanted more than anything to kill the bastard with his bare hands. His anger was at a point he could barely describe it in words. Still, he had to keep himself calm. He knew this.

"When he... shoved his... *dick* down my throat, I couldn't even *breathe*... I threw up.... multiple times because of it. And he... he laughed at me. He called me a whore, motherfucker, a slut... and

I... I felt like an *animal*, like I wasn't even a real person to him... Tell me..." Goku practically *plead* for an answer. "What can I do...? What can I do to make these memories go away...? I want them gone..."

"...I don't know..." Vegeta finally admitted. Goku was hurting - He could see it, *feel* it. "What you've suffered is *unimaginable*... and I wish I knew what to tell you, to make it better, but I don't... I'm sorry..." In that moment, he enveloped him even tighter into his arms, cradling his body against his own. His voice was strained as he continued. "*I'm **so** sorry, Kakarot...* What that monster did to you... What he *stole* from you... you should have **never** had to endure that... You shouldn't have been **hurt** like this. I promise... I won't allow this to happen to you again, not by *his* hands or *anybody's*. Not even my *own*... I'll even... *protect* you if I have to..."

The word "protect" felt foreign on his tongue, especially when using it in relation to Kakarot. After all, it wasn't as though he thought the man was weak or that he was looking down on him, far from it. Goku was one of the most physically capable men Vegeta had ever *known.* But even people like *him* needed *help* sometimes. As much as he hated to admit it, they were a *team* . They did things together, although their ways of *doing things* were *different*.

A lump formed in his throat as he tried to keep himself from breaking down.

Dark memories plagued his mind of the times he was but a child, made to suffer at the hands of the monsters who had treated him as nothing but an *animal*, a *pet.* A *plaything*.

*I would have **never -** not in a* million years - *wished for **anybody** to go through what I had to, least of all somebody like Kakarot.*

He almost expected Goku to argue back and say he didn't need protecting, but he didn't.

Instead, Goku actually seemed to genuinely relax when he heard his words. "Vegeta...?"

"Hm?"

"I know I said it the other day, but thank you... for just *being here*. And listening to me. It really means a lot to me..." Goku said in a muffled voice. "You mean a lot to me..."

In response to what the other Saiyan had just said to him, Vegeta found himself completely *stunned at first*. He didn't even know how to *react*. But slowly, his expression softened, and he titled his head down to where was - *almost* - kissing him on the top of his head.

In these moments, more than any other, Goku needed to know that he was *loved* , and genuinely *cared* for. Above all else that he was *wanted*.

"...You mean a lot to me as well..."

Goku's face turned red as soon as Vegeta uttered those words of affirmation. He was elated. He suddenly felt a bit giddy.

"Do you... mind if we... stay like this...?" He asked, bashfully, listening to the other Saiyan's heartbeat, which matched his own. They were both nervous and he could tell. "For just a little while? I'd like... to rest... if that's okay."

Goku still seemed somewhat nervous and Vegeta still had many more questions he wanted to ask, but all of that could wait. In the end, he couldn't have possibly been more grateful just to have this moment with him.

"Of course, go right ahead..." He told him. "As long as you need to..."

Upon hearing that, Goku closed his eyes, and began to relax, more than he had been. "Thanks..."

"Don't mention it..." Vegeta continued to lay there, allowing himself to just *breathe* . He had become so lost in the other Saiyan's body heat that he no longer cared to keep track of how much time had passed.

Eventually, he could tell that Goku had dozed off, quiet contented breaths escaping from his lips as he slept.

It was at this point that Vegeta realized that his arm had fallen asleep, so he slowly began to shift underneath Goku, careful not to wake him up. He then positioned Goku on the bed next to him, before placing a pillow under his head and spreading a blanket over him.

Taking off his gloves and placing them beside him, Vegeta leaned with his back against his bedframe in an attempt to get more comfortable. He looked over at Goku, wordlessly observing his slumber.

Hesitantly, he reached out towards Goku's face and grazed the back of his hand over his cheek in a tender motion. His skin was soft and warm to the touch, Vegeta had never really taken the chance to do this.

A few minutes later, Vegeta worked his fingers up his temple towards his bangs, brushing them to the side.

The peaceful expression on Goku's face set Vegeta's heart on *fire.*

And yet, it seemed strange. Six months ago, he wouldn't have been caught dead doing these things for him, *caring* for him like this. But here he was, doing exactly that. And more than that, he had even fallen in love with him.

Yes, he *loved* him, with every fiber of his being and he'd do *anything* he had to if it meant getting the infuriatingly stupid smile he knew and loved so much back. But he didn't know if Goku felt the same way as him. Sure, he'd like that, but even if he didn't, even if he *never* returned his feelings, Vegeta didn't care, none of that mattered to him.

*More than **anything** , all I want right now is for him to **heal...***

Vegeta leaned over, holding Goku's hair back.. Without even questioning it this time, he found himself planting a small kiss on the sleeping man's forehead, before once again laying down next to him, this time with an arm draped over his stomach and resting his own head against *Goku's* chest. He shut his eyes, clutching lightly at the fabric of Goku's Gi, slowly drifting off to sleep with one final thought - a silent vow - racing through his mind.

We're going to fix this. I swear it... At the very least, he won't have to suffer through this alone...

Never again.

*I will keep him safe. From both that man **and** from **himself** .*

*Everything is going to be alright. It **has** to be...*

Yet down deep, Vegeta was not stupid enough to think that such issues would go away overnight. Goku would probably never *truly be okay* after this.

In the end, he only had one option and that was to stand by his side and support him to the best of his ability. And just maybe, one day, Goku would finally be able to realize that this wasn't his fault.

...

A/N: until next time whenever that is.

Together

Story: Even The Strongest, Chapter 5

(I may end up deleting this chapter, I'm not too happy with how it turned out, seems kinda bad to me)

A/N: So good news, my trial went well, my rapist got charged for second degree rape and three counts of sex offenses, he'll be in prison for a minimum of 27 years. Turns out he was a serial rapist and had other victims as well, he had recordings of many victims on his computer, one of which was completely unconscious.

ALSO THERE ARE SOME RAPE FLASHBACKS IN THIS CHAPTER SO YOU NEED TO BE WARNED. Most of the conversations are things the rapist actually said to me and did(few things improvised because memories are still hazy or to take Goku's character into consideration and also because I remembered these things during my trial.), you might want to be careful when proceeding, but I will give a content warning on the beginning part of it, so you can skip it. It was very hard for me to write so it's pretty vague just to get through it, but it's still touching on a very sensitive matter so yeah.

ONE OTHER THING: There's a very small change to the Grandfather Gohan backstory to this. In this, Goku not only has a grave for Gohan but he also for certain saw Gohan's body after he was killed, but just like in canon, he still didn't know he was the one who did it until he saw Vegeta's great ape form. This chapter goes into a little bit of that trauma because once again venting purposes and I don't see a lot of that explored, but this does get sorta dark so yeah.

Additionally, I moved the photo lineup part from chapter 3 to this chapter because it's closer to what I remember happened later.

TRIGGER WARNINGS: (again), Rape flashbacks, very dirty language. Self-harm, cutting, and talk of death/suicide again, also past death and exploration of grief.

…

(RAPE FLASHBACKS AHEAD)

(RAPE FLASHBACKS AHEAD)

(RAPE FLASHBACKS AHEAD)

(RAPE FLASHBACKS AHEAD)

(RAPE FLASHBACKS AHEAD)

(RAPE FLASHBACKS AHEAD)

"I don't think I want to do this."

Goku's attempt at speaking up for himself was the first thing he really processed himself saying in a while. It was weak and timid, but loud enough to be heard.

A body was being pressed against his. Hands were fondling him, groping his frame. Stroking him.

Goku had been completely stripped of his clothing and was naked under the man above him. He felt vulnerable. Exposed. And somehow, despite being labeled one of the toughest fighters in the universe, ***utterly defenseless*** .

"Just relax. 'm not going to do anything." *Allan spoke right over him entirely, shoving fingers inside of him one by one.*

Goku winced at the pressure. He wanted to believe his words but he couldn't. Not after this.

" ***You must be feeling*** **something** ***down there, since you're erect."*** *Allan smirked,*

at him, and yet Goku hadn't even **noticed** *it.* ***"You want me inside of you that bad?"***

Goku hadn't noticed *the way his body chose to perceive this. He certainly wasn't enjoying it. He didn't even* ***feel*** *aroused. So why? Was Allan somehow right?* ***No.*** *He hadn't* ***asked*** *for this.*

The Saiyan had never felt more humiliated in his life than he did right now.

He sputtered out something akin to an argument, but his speech was so slurred in that moment and his mind so foggy that it wasn't legible. He didn't even really remember what he had said,

something about the body's natural reaction?

More than anything, his mind was screaming at him to run, but he had almost completely frozen up and he was too intoxicated by the drugs to properly think.

...

At some point, the man started recording him, taking pictures of him, especially his genitals.

"I don't think I feel comfortable with this." Goku barely had the courage to speak once again.

Everything felt like it was a blur.

"I told you to relax."

Before Goku could respond, lips crashed against his, and a tongue was shoved into his mouth. He assumed it was the drugs he had taken, but he felt strange, like he was unable to resist it. So he let it happen. This wasn't the first time the man had kissed him after all, he was somewhat used to the process by now. At the very least, it wasn't painful.

*Still, he would have preferred to do this sort of thing with **Vegeta** one day, not a guy like **this** . Tears welled up in his eyes.*

*Even though he was under the influence, he knew that this was **wrong** . He could vaguely remember moving his legs around, his thighs tensing up as he once again said in his own way that he didn't feel comfortable and yet, in spite of that, Allan **continued** to ignore him.*

"I don't want to do this..." Goku finally choked out in a slightly harsher tone than before, actually saying "don't want to" instead of "don't think I want to".

***"Stop struggling and turn over."** Allan shut him down immediately, flipping Goku's body over where his stomach was on the bed.*

All of a sudden, something was shoved inside of him and pain shot up Goku's backside. It didn't take a genius to know what that was. He felt as though he had been stabbed from the inside.

"That hurts...!" He shouted.

"I'm sorry. Am I crossing a line?" *Allan talked over him once again, but nothing Goku said made the slightest difference as he continued thrusting.*

Goku shouted so many times he lost count. At some point, he completely gave up. He was in too much agony to really even process it anymore. He eventually tried to tell himself that just laying there and cooperating would make everything go by faster.

...

Goku woke up in a cold sweat, gasping for air.

*I **did** say I didn't want to. I forgot. But he didn't listen. He wouldn't. He said he wouldn't do anything, but he did it anyway .*

In that moment, it felt like Allan was inside of him all once more, thrusting into his backside. *Over and over again.*

…

"You like my dick in your mouth?"

"Mn-mn."

"You don't? How about you shove it down deeper?"

…

Goku jolted out of bed, bile rising to his throat. He wasn't even really paying attention to his surroundings. He only knew he needed something to distract himself with.

Pain. He needed *pain* .

The Saiyan paced back and forth frantically for a few seconds, biting down on his hand and clawing at his arm in an attempt to stimulate himself.

…

"Use your* whole *tongue."

"I can't…"

"Motherfucker, you threw up again."

"I can't help it. I have a weak gag reflex. Having trouble breathing."

"Is that so? Then find another way to make it work."

…

I couldn't breathe, I couldn't breathe, yet he wouldn't listen, he kept shoving my head down onto his-

Not enough.

*This isn't **enough** !*

...

"Talk dirty to me. Say you're a filthy whore."

"Whore? What's… a whore…?"

"...A whore is somebody who's nasty and has lots of sex, So tell me… are you* nasty *, Goku?"

"I don't…know."

Goku could somehow tell there was more to that word than just somebody who had a lot of sex. Sexually… promiscuous.

*He had once heard Chichi use the word somewhere, the context which he couldn't recall, but he knew that must be what **he** was now.*

After all, he didn't even know this man, yet here he was having his body taken from him by a total stranger.

But this wasn't sex. It wasn't even consensual. He hadn't consented to this. He had said he didn't want to do this multiple times but he had been ignored.

"You don't know? Well, I'm telling you you are, so come on, say it already, call yourself a filthy whore."

"I don't know."

…

I've got to find something sharp, like a knife.

I need to bleed. To breathe. To ***think*** .

After a second, Goku rushed into the bathroom, so upset that he didn't even think to close the door. He began to shuffle through some drawers to find something sufficient.

…

"Smile for the camera. I said SMILE."

He had tears in his eyes. He had just thrown up. He couldn't breathe.

It should be so obvious that he didn't want to be doing this, that he wasn't enjoying this, but the man above him, continued grabbing his hair and here, shoving himself into his throat.

And now he was filming him.

Again.

It was humiliating.

"Here, take my phone. I want you to film yourself. Film yourself sucking my cock like the slut you are."

…

Why was I so cooperative…?

Finally in the third drawer he checked, he found the perfect object. *A box cutter.* Exactly the kind of thing that he was looking for.

Without the slightest ounce of hesitation, he pulled back his wrist cuff, creating a slash in the skin. The first line was thin, almost as if he were testing, but the second and third were much more bold.

…

"I need to leave."

"No, don't. I still need to cum first. I wanna record you swallowing it. I'll hook up my phone later so we can watch it on the TV."

"I really need to go."

"It'll just be five or ten more minutes."

"Alright…"

Five minutes.

Ten minutes.

Fifteen minutes.

"I should go."

"No!"

Twenty minutes.

Thirty.

Forty.

He didn't know how much time had passed, but he kept asking to leave, each request denied with the man either telling him no or saying that he needed to cum first, until finally:

"I have an appointment. I'll come back."

"Well, how long are you gonna be gone for?"

"About two hours."

In his hazy state of mind, he hears the man retort something about inviting him into his home off the streets, the "gutters".

"Sorry, I have an appointment."

…

- (END RAPE FLASHBACKS)

- (END RAPE FLASHBACKS)

- (END RAPE FLASHBACKS)

- (END RAPE FLASHBACKS)

- (END RAPE FLASHBACKS)

- (END RAPE FLASHBACKS)

Memories continued to play through his head, overwhelming him more and more by the moment.

With frustrated tears welling up in his eyes, Goku sat down against a nearby wall and began to create slash after slash, feeling captivated at the sight of the crimson liquid dripping down his arm onto the floor. The physical pain actually felt nice in comparison to the memories, it was distracting. Calming. And above all it was something he actually *understood* .

"Kakarot?" All of a sudden a voice snapped him back to his present surroundings. It was Vegeta. He had been woken up by the sound of the drawers slamming open and closed and got worried when Goku didn't return for a while, so he had finally come to check on him, but *this* was the *last* thing he had expected.

The very sight of seeing Goku cutting his own wrist with a box cutter had caused his heart to skip a beat. He gasped slightly, rushing over and kneeling down by his side in a mere instant. "You idiot…! What are you *doing*...?! Stop that!"

Goku wasn't even able to respond before Vegeta reached out, grabbing his hand in an attempt to pry the box cutter out of his grip. But Goku didn't want to cooperate, he refused to lose his grasp on the weapon.

"Give me the box cutter, Kakarot. Right *now* ." Vegeta's voice was strained, he was barely holding back from crying himself.

"No, I *need* this…" Goku rationalized, still somewhat out of it.

"No, you *don't* !" Vegeta snapped. "You're strong. You can *fight* this."

"How *can* I?" Goku choked out, tears falling down his face. "Nothing else was helping me. *Please…* "

" *No* , I'm not going to just sit here and let you do this!" Vegeta refused to relent, keeping one hand clasped over the box cutter and the other over Goku's hand, even as Goku refused to let go of it. "I told you before. If there is something upsetting you, then you *talk* about it. You do *not* hurt yourself. Do you hear me…? Let the box cutter *go* ."

He felt like he was at the end of his rope. He didn't want to use physical force if he could help it, but he wasn't really being left with much of a choice.

Fortunately, upon hearing that, Goku slowly began to release his grip for the first time. Vegeta didn't even think before using the opportunity to take it from him. He tossed the weapon far off to the side before turning his attention back to Goku's bleeding arm.

Vegeta's eyes widened, his breath hitching in his throat when he finally had a better chance to assess the damage that Goku had done to himself. The skin was *marred beyond recognition* .

He quickly grabbed a nearby towel and wrapped it around his arm to stanch the bleeding.

"... *Why* ? Why didn't you just *say something*... ?" His voice started to tremble as he kept his grasp on Goku's wrist and leaned his forehead against his hands. "If I had known… if you had told me that you were *feeling* this way again, then I would have *sat* with you… I would have…"

At that moment, he paused.

…What *would* he have done? For all his talk of helping Goku through these urges, he had never once seen somebody intentionally hurt themselves for reasons other than training or battle in his entire life. And to make matters worse, this wasn't just simple *scratching* anymore. He honestly had no clue how to even handle or approach a situation like this. What was the right thing to say? What was the right thing to *do* ?

"I didn't want to bother you…" Goku choked out, feeling ashamed and knowing Vegeta was upset with him.

"*Bother me…*?" Vegeta's head snapped up upon hearing his words, completely thrown for a loop. All of a sudden, he just *lost* it, tears falling from his face. "You really think you're bothering me by asking for help?! *Goddamn it*, you idiot, I wouldn't *be* here with you right now if I didn't *want* to be! Haven't you *realized* that by now? The only thing that's *bothering* me is the fact that you've been *hurting yourself*. And now you decide to use my *box cutter*?! Why do you keep *doing* this? Surely, you can't believe this shit is actually *helping* you! This *isn't healthy*! It's *foolish*!"

Goku recoiled when those words left Vegeta's mouth.

"I know that!" He shouted, feeling worse than ever as he took in the impact of Vegeta's explosive outburst. He covered his face with his free hand to wipe away the tears that began falling from his own face. "I just… I'm sorry, okay? Please… don't be mad at me…"

Vegeta felt a pang of guilt as Goku's apology and plea sunk in. He knew right then and there that he had gone too far. He had let his emotions control his actions all over again. But he wasn't *angry* at Goku. Not in the slightest. He was *terrified* .

After all, Goku didn't really understand any of this better than *he* did. He was suffering, and trying to cope with this in the only way he could really *think* to at the moment.

Shit.

*I've got to apologize, and **fix** this, or else he'll just think I'm being a jerk.*

"I'm… sorry. I shouldn't have yelled at you. It won't happen again. I just wish you would have talked to me before you did something like this…" His voice cracked as he spoke. After a long time, he pulled back the towel to check on the bleeding. The blood flow fortunately seemed to have slowed down some. He then placed Goku's arm down in his lap, lightly blotting up any blood that oozed out after that point. "...Do you want a senzu bean? We still have some from earlier. Or do you just want to bandage this up…? We'll do whatever you want."

"I'd rather not waste a Senzu bean on some minor cuts like this." Goku muttered, looking down with a guilty expression.

Vegeta almost wanted to protest against calling them "minor cuts", but as long as Kakarot was willing to let him tend to his injuries, he didn't care too much about the technicalities.

Although it was strange, almost like they had done a complete flop. In the past, Vegeta couldn't stand using Senzu beans, but now he had no issue with suggesting them. Now, it was *Goku* who suddenly seemed against them for some reason.

"Then get up. We're washing this off." Vegeta said, pulling him up by his hand. He led him over to the sink and pulled out a couple stools for them to sit on. Vegeta fumbled through the top drawer, grabbing a couple antiseptic wipes, medical tape as well as a gauze roll. He then turned on and adjusted the water until it was luke-warm, instructing him to put his arm under the water.

Goku hesitantly cooperated, wincing in anticipation as the water hit his fresh cuts. He immediately tried to pull his arm away when Vegeta reached out, holding one of the wipes towards his wrist, but the other Saiyan stopped him.

"Hold still. I'm not going to hurt you." Vegeta said, gently blotting up the blood stains and trying his best to avoid making the wounds bleed again.

Goku refused to meet his gaze as Vegeta looked up at him.

"Will you tell me what caused this? Surely, you must have had a reason." Vegeta probed. "Is it the memories again…? A nightmare? What?"

"...I remembered something." Goku finally mumbled after a long silence.

"Oh? And what did you remember…?" Vegeta asked in a patient tone of voice. He turned off the water, grabbing a paper towel and proceeded to dry off Goku's arm.

"...I *did* say I didn't want to do that, I **did**. But he-he did it anyways, and told me to stop struggling." Goku stammered, becoming nervous. "He wouldn't listen."

"Of course he didn't. He's a *rapist* and rapists don't *care* what people want." Vegeta spoke in a soft voice. "Whether you had outright said no or not wouldn't have made the slightest bit of difference to him. I told you that."

"Why couldn't I remember it before…? It feels like large chunks of my memories are *gone* ." Goku practically hissed in frustration.

It was irritating. Even though he wanted to stop thinking about this stuff, he didn't like not knowing what all had happened to him. He wanted to forget, but at the same time, he *didn't* . He didn't *know* what he wanted anymore.

"You were drugged… And it was traumatizing. It's probably your brain's way of protecting you." Vegeta reasoned as he finished drying the cuts. He then began wiping down his arm with another antiseptic wipe, before reaching into the drawer and taking out some antibacterial ointment. Goku flinched slightly when Vegeta began rubbing it on his injuries.

"When… When he was recording me… He-he told me… to smile for the camera and even record myself as I was sucking him off…" He started shaking as he spoke. "Asked me… if I liked his *dick* in my mouth… I couldn't *breathe* , I kept choking… throwing up. I told him it's because I have a weak gag reflex. But he didn't care, he kept grabbing my hair and shoving my head down onto it. He kept talking over me, *ignoring* me when I said I needed to leave. He told me not to, so many times."

Vegeta stayed quiet, allowing him to vent with a heavy heart. He had already heard some of this but it was just as revolting to listen to as it was the first time.

Goku bit his lip. "It was so humiliating... The things he said to me… I cooperated… I thought… if I cooperated… if I did what he asked… that he'd… that it… Why can't I *talk...?!* "

" It's *okay* . Just take your time." Vegeta said, calmly, as he tenderly began to wrap the gauze roll around his wrist.

"...I thought… if I did what he asked me to… it would make things go by faster, but it… it didn't." Goku broke down as he spoke, pulling at his hair. "Several times, I started to get up to dress myself… but he pushed me back on the bed and held me down… I felt tired and sluggish, like I wasn't all there. My body was weak, and I kept freezing up when it happened… I couldn't fight him

off even though some part of me *wanted* to. He pressured me to stay. He kept telling me to give him *five to ten more minutes,* he said that at least six times and he *still* hadn't cummed . "

"He's a scumbag… He knew the only way you would actually have sex with him was by drugging you and forcing it on you. I'm sorry… that you had to go through that." Vegeta spoke as he broke off several pieces of medical tape from the roll and stuck them to the gauze wrap to make sure it didn't come loose.

Goku didn't say anything after hearing that. But Vegeta didn't expect him to.

"I want you to leave this alone until it heals, do you hear me?" He instructed, before pulling the wrist cuff back down over his bandaged wrist. "I'll know if it's been tampered with."

He became worried as Goku silently continued pulling at his hair.

"Kakarot, stop that. A Saiyan's hair isn't exactly replaceable, you know…" Vegeta scolded him, softly grabbing his hand and bringing it down to his lap as he brushed his hair with his fingers to straighten it back out somewhat since Goku had ruffled it. "Treat it with some honor. And have more *respect* for *yourself* . You deserve better than this."

Goku turned his head away in shame. "... I'm sorry."

Vegeta's eyebrows creased in response.

"Don't apologize. I'm not *mad* at you…" He started to caress his cheek, but immediately retracted his hand when Goku flinched. "Sure, I admit I might have gotten a bit upset because I don't understand why you've been hurting yourself to *deal* with this, but it's not like you've even been taught *how* to. You're having a hard time processing this experience and that's completely understandable. This is just something we're going to have to figure out together. Even so, for any of this to work, you've got to *trust* me. And this?"

He reached over and picked up the box cutter from the floor, holding it up in front of him. "You can*not,* and *will* not, under *any circumstances,* allow this to *control* you *again*. Are we clear on that?"

Goku let his hair hide his eyes, nodding.

"Good." Vegeta said softly, putting the box cutter back into the drawer after briefly running the blade under the water to clean off any blood. He then got up from the stool, urging Goku to follow him. "Come on, let's go back to bed…"

It was almost ironic how he could go from being harsh one minute to gentle the next.

"Okay..." Goku replied, getting up as well.

Once they had returned to the bed, Vegeta decided it was best to ask permission first. "Do you… want me to hug you like before?"

"Mhm..." Goku nodded shyly, blushing.

Vegeta felt his heart thumping faster than ever in his chest at the sight.

He reached out and pulled him in his arms in a similar fashion to before.

"There…" Vegeta smirked a bit in a way to praise his cooperation.

"Now before we go to sleep, is there anything else you want to tell me about? Anything at all?"

"I just…" Goku covered his face with his hands, his shoulders shaking. "I'm worried…"

"About what?" Vegeta encouraged.

"...If… anybody sees those videos he took, they'll think I'm a *whore*... " Goku started curl in on himself burying his forehead against Vegeta's chest. "Just like he said I was… That I *consented* to that; that I *wanted* it."

"You are *not* a *whore,* Kakarot... I *know* you didn't consent. Krillin knows. Bulma as well. Even Chichi. We *all* do. So do not *ever* allow yourself to believe *anything* that pervert said about you, because it isn't *true*. *None* of it is. Look at me." Vegeta urged him to meet his eyes. "You are a truly *amazing* person. You *came to me* of your own *accord* and opened up about something that so many others wouldn't have been *able* to in your situation. I cannot even *begin* to tell you how *proud* I am of you for that."

"...I feel so *disgusting* right now . " Goku muttered, completely ignoring it. Even if Vegeta felt proud of him, he couldn't feel proud of himself after what had happened.

"I know…" Vegeta pulled him tighter to himself, his heart aching at the sight. "But all of this is on him and *him alone*. *He's* the disgusting one, you hear me? Not *you.* And everybody will *see* that."

"..." Goku couldn't even respond. The very idea of anybody seeing those videos and pictures terrified him. Even he himself didn't want to see them.

Vegeta was silent as Goku tried to stifle his sobs against his chest.

"This pain you're feeling, I know it doesn't seem like it right now, but it *will* fade in time." He let out a breath he didn't know he was holding in, placing a hand on the back of his head. "I promise it will…"

As Vegeta continued to hold him in his arms, Goku didn't say anything further. He slowly began to relax, thinking about everything the other man had said, his words of encouragement.

He truly wanted to believe him.

He really *did* .

…

The next morning Vegeta and Goku could be seen in one of the dining halls of Capsule Corp, gorging down on pancakes and waffles alongside Trunks and Bulma, who was watching the Saiyans with some amusement.

"Man, the food here is always the best. I just can't get enough of it." Goku grinned, after finishing up a large plate of waffles.

"I'm glad you like it so much, Goku." Bulma smiled. "Just remember you're always free to come here as much as you like."

"Hey, no fair, that was mine, Vegeta! I was just about to eat that!" Goku suddenly protested as Vegeta forked the last sausage patty and took a bite.

"Yeah? Well, maybe you should have been faster in grabbing it. It's first come, first serve."

"Fine, *be that way* . I'll just take *these* instead." Goku grinned, picking up three pieces of bacon off of Vegeta's plate.

"You asshole, give those back!" Vegeta dropped the sausage patty and immediately jumped at him to reach out towards the bacon, but, before he could, Goku had already shoved them into his mouth.

"Damn you…" Vegeta clenched his fist, unable to contain his irritation. "I'm going to *kill* you for that!"

"Sounds *fun* ." Goku purred, taking that as an invitation for a sparring match. He leaned in towards him with a mischievous grin. "So when do we *start*... ?"

The two Saiyans' faces were yet again only inches apart, leaving Vegeta momentarily rendered speechless. Heat rushed through his body.

Bulma almost choked, holding back the sudden urge to laugh. Trunks had an unreadable expression on his face, noticing it. He hadn't said much the entire time, just listened to them banter.

"Are you really itching for another sparring match that badly…?" Vegeta deadpanned, but made no attempt to pull back. His voice was somewhat weaker than normal as he looked into Goku's eyes, completely captivated by them.

"More than anything." Goku said, before frowning a bit, insecurely. "Why? Do you not *want* to…?"

"No, it's not that, but…" Vegeta paused, remembering Goku's panic attack from the day before. He almost considered protesting, but at the same time he didn't want to baby him. "Oh, fine… I'll spar with you…"

"Really? After what happened yesterday, I was worried that you might not…" All of a sudden, Goku felt a napkin being rubbed over his cheek, interrupting his thoughts. "Hey-"

"There was cream cheese on your face. Learn to clean up after yourself." Vegeta scolded, but not out of ill intent.

"Sorry, the waffles were just so good, I couldn't help it. I guess I made a little bit of a mess of myself, huh?" Goku giggled, but that's when he noticed that Vegeta had a slightly saddened look on his face. "...What's wrong…? You seem upset…"

"Huh? Oh. No, it's nothing." Vegeta said in a low voice. He didn't want to bring up what happened the night before, but it was impossible not to worry about it, and he couldn't just leave things as they were. At the same time, he needed to get a better idea of how to *approach* the situation before he could even really *talk* to Goku about it. Vegeta turned away to face Bulma. "Bulma, I need your advice on something. Do you have a minute that we could speak somewhere privately…?"

"Sure, Vegeta, why don't we go to my lab to talk?" Bulma offered, getting up.

"Stay here." Vegeta briefly caressed Goku's cheek as he started to leave. "I'll be right back."

"Alright." Goku started to touch his hand but Vegeta had already pulled it away before he could.

Some part of him wondered what it was Vegeta needed to talk with Bulma about. He couldn't help but get the feeling it was about him somehow, but didn't have the heart to ask.

He hoped Vegeta wasn't too upset with him after what happened last night or the day before. He had been making things harder than ever for him.

…

"So what was it you wanted to ask me about, Vegeta?"

Bulma sat down at her desk as Vegeta sat on the edge of it. His arms were folded over his chest and his legs were crossed, his posture stiff.

"It's…" he paused for a moment. He didn't want to give away any details but he wasn't entirely sure he knew how to deal with this alone anymore, at least not without some guidance. "How do you stop a person from hurting himself?"

"From… what…?" Bulma paused for a moment to stare at him. With no context, she had no idea what exactly he was even asking, whether it was general recklessness he was referring to or if he actually meant…

"Like somebody who intentionally scratches or cuts their skin when they're stressed out." Vegeta clairfied. "How do you make them stop?"

"Oh, you mean *self-harm* … Uh…" Bulma paused, confused as to why Vegeta was even asking about such a thing.

"It has a name…?" Vegeta mused, a bit surprised.

"You didn't know?" Bulma asked.

"No. I've never… seen somebody do it before." Vegeta admitted. "It… worried me…"

"Vegeta," Bulma approached the question with hesitation. "this wouldn't happen to be about Goku, would it?"

Aside from herself and Trunks, Goku was one of the only other people Vegeta interacted with regularly. Who else *could* it be? She certainly knew it couldn't be Whis or Beerus.

Vegeta looked at her apprehensively. There was no point in hiding it. "Y…yeah…, he's been doing this thing where he uses his nails to dig into his arm until it bleeds, and last night he even got ahold of my box cutter and sliced up his wrist. But I don't… *understand* it. This isn't just *stimulating his hands anymore* . He's..."

"...Calm down, first you need to understand what's causing it." Bulma asked, her tone softening with concern. "Have you tried talking with him about it?"

"Of course I have… It's all because of what that bastard *did* to him." Vegeta said.

"The rape? I figured it might be something like that..." Bulma said. "Self-harm usually only manifests in people with some sort of trauma or mental health issues, like depression, anxiety, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, etc. As for the reasons behind it, it varies from person to person. But my guess is maybe Goku is having a hard time processing or understanding the emotional pain he's feeling and is trying to channel it out into something he *does* understand, being the physical pain."

"Matching… the inside… to the outside…?" Vegeta mused aloud.

"...Tell me… Have you thought about suggesting he see a therapist? One who specializes in rape counseling, for instance?" Bulma asked. "They could talk with him about what he's going through, and help him find alternative ways of relieving stress."

"Such people *exist* …?" Vegeta seemed legitimately surprised.

No way. Bulma paused. "Hold on, did… nobody on your home planet… *do* that…?"

"No, why *would* they…?" Vegeta asked. "Somebody with issues like Kakarot's would have probably just been killed or discarded of for it."

"Are you serious?" Bulma exclaimed. "That's *awful* !"

"Hey, I never said I *agreed* with it… At least not *now* anyways. It's just how our race did things." Vegeta said as a matter of factly, but with a downcast look in his eyes. "We prioritized functionality above all else, so if somebody couldn't… *integrate… or handle things,* whether it be mentally *or* physically*…,* then they were viewed as weak and often disposed of. Even my own brother… Tarble, he was sent off planet by our father simply because his power level was lower than average."

He didn't speak about his family often, it wasn't something he even liked *thinking* about. But he never truly *hated* Tarble. And looking back now, he was one of the only Saiyans left in Universe 7 aside from Goku, and one that was actually *innocent* by comparison to the majority of their race.

Bulma was quiet as she considered his response. "You know, I'm starting to think Goku isn't the only one in need of a therapist right now."

"And just what are you even *implying,* Bulma?" Vegeta scoffed. "That *I , the almighty Prince Vegeta,* should go to some random *quack* I've never even met before and talk about my *feelings* ? You've got to be kidding!"

"It's nothing to be *ashamed* of." Bulma said nonchalantly. "He'll, even I've talked to a few here and there before."

"Well, I don't *need* one. And nor does Kakarot..." Vegeta responded smugly. "I highly doubt he'd even want one *anyway* ..."

"Have you asked *him* that?" Bulma questioned.

"...Well, no..., but I'm the only person he's really been *talking* to about these things, and even then, it's obvious that he's holding back…" Vegeta said. "I'm surprised he was able to *answer* any questions from the detective yesterday morning, given how he could barely even *speak* with Krillin's *work partner* around…"

"It's not like he would be alone. If you're the person he feels most comfortable around right now, then why not just stay with him while the therapist is talking to him?" Bulma asked.

"I could do that…?" Vegeta inquired, as if he was actually considering it.

"Yeah. Think you'd be interested? I could recommend him one." Bulma offered.

"...As tempting as it may be, I'm going to have to decline, for now anyway. I would prefer not to have to resort to something like that unless it was absolutely necessary." Vegeta muttered. It's not that he didn't want Goku to get support, but from what he could tell, he was very unlikely to actually accept such help. Of course if push came to shove, the offer was certainly something to keep in mind. "Surely you must have some sort of *other* suggestions. He doesn't even want to *be* on Earth right now… Besides, in case you're forgetting, we're not *human* , there's not a single person on this planet that would truly have the knowledge or *qualifications* to deal with a Saiyan better than I could and I myself am already doing a shit job at that as it *is* . So unless this therapist you speak of specializes in *Saiyan* psychology, I don't want to hear about it."

"I mean… If you're going to be stubborn about it, I'm not really sure what to tell you, Vegeta. The most I can do at this point is print out some articles on self-harm. Maybe *those* would help you find what you're looking for." Bulma sighed as she started to type something into her computer browser. "What he needs more than anything right now is to explore other coping mechanisms."

"Like what?" Vegeta asked.

"It's hard to say exactly." Bulma admitted. "Something that helps one person isn't automatically going to help another. If it's a matter of stimulating his hands when he gets stressed, I suppose he could try fidgets."

"Fidgets?" Vegeta inquired.

"Yeah. Hold on a second." Bulma said, reaching into her desk drawer to pull out a fidget cube, a Rubik's cube, and a small container of putty. "The next time he starts trying to scratching himself, have him play around with one of these and see if it helps him any. I've never self-harmed before, but it does at least help manage anxiety."

Vegeta took the objects from her, looking over them. "I have my doubts these will be enough to stop him from hurting himself again, but I suppose I could have him *try*... "

If there was even the slightest chance that it would help Goku, it was worth at least *testing* .

"Hey, even if it *doesn't* , you can't just give up on him, you hear me? Finding the right coping mechanisms is a matter of trial and error and can take time and patience, so don't get angry at him if he gets upset and hurts himself again, you have to understand where *he's* coming from."

"I *want* to understand this, Bulma, I really *do* , but I just…" Vegeta clenched his free fist. "I *can't stand seeing him that way.* "

"It's *hard* , I know." Bulma gave a small pain-filled smile. "But you've got to be patient. For *Goku* . He *needs* you right now..."

When she said that, Vegeta couldn't respond. He looked away. He knew she was right, and he would do anything he could to be there for Goku but that didn't make this any easier.

Bulma sighed a bit before turning her focus back to the computer and searching through more articles.

"Oh, I forgot to ask something." She said after a long moment of silence.

"What is it?" Vegeta glanced back at her.

"How well is Goku responding to physical touch?" Bulma asked. "He tensed up when it was me, but he doesn't seem to be all that bothered by it when it's you."

"Not exactly." Vegeta corrected her. "Sometimes, he's okay with it, but sometimes he's *not* . It's rocky at best."

"Then what about when he *is* okay with it, is there anything in particular that he likes?" Bulma asked.

"Well, yesterday he did say he liked being hugged by me..." Vegeta mumbled with a small blush. "He seemed calmer afterwards."

Bulma smiled a bit after hearing that. "Then I think you should also focus on some touch-based coping mechanisms, like that. Other options include things like rubbing his back or holding his hands. It should help keep him grounded. Just always try to make sure you try to give him some sort of *warning* first. If you don't, it's liable to make things worse."

When she said that, Vegeta made a mental note that he should ask permission more often. There had been so many occasions that he had hugged or touched Goku without even asking first. Maybe he needed to be more aware and vigilant. He didn't want to accidentally make the wrong move one day and scare him.

"Here are some articles to start with, you can always come back for more." Bulma handed him some papers she had just printed out.

"Thanks…" Vegeta said as he folded them up and slipped them into his uniform. "For the advice."

They weren't married anymore, but over the years, Bulma had done a lot for him. She had given him a home, and even took care of him back when he was still technically her enemy. That kindness was something he would be eternally grateful for.

"It's no problem. I'm still serious about recommending him a therapist, though." Bulma said. "Maybe you can try asking him about it at some point if you feel like things have gotten out of hand."

"I'll be sure to keep that in mind…" Vegeta was quiet for a moment, some part of him thinking about it in spite of what he had said earlier.

…

When Vegeta returned to the kitchen, he found Goku resting his head in his arms which he had folded over the table. Trunks had left.

"Kakarot, come on." Vegeta lightly kicked Goku's foot to get his attention. "We can go now."

"Oh. Right…" Goku raised his head to meet his eyes with a small smile.

"What's wrong?" Vegeta frowned slightly, able to tell it was forced.

"It's nothing." Goku looked away as he got up. "Let's just go."

"Wait." Vegeta said, moving in front of him and grabbing hold of Goku's obi. He stretched it out a bit.

"Vegeta, what are you doing…?" Goku started to tense up at first, but seemed to calm down when he saw that Vegeta was just slipping some things inside of it. "What are those?"

"Fidgets. Keep them." Vegeta said. "Bulma suggested I give them to you. She said they might help stimulate you in case you feel like hurting yourself again."

"Huh. Wait, you *told* her?" Goku looked a little hurt. "Why…?"

"Because I care for you, you idiot... You needed help, so I asked the smartest person I know." Vegeta said softly, as he straightened back up his obi, before looking up at him. "I didn't understand this before, but I'm going to *try* . For you… "

At that moment, Goku gave a shy grin, before slowly reaching out and hugging him. "Thank you, Vegeta… You're always… looking out for me… means a lot…"

Vegeta was surprised by the gesture, warmth once again surging through him. Slowly he slipped his arms out of his hold and wrapped them around Goku's neck in an embrace so Goku's arms remained around his waist. "Yeah, well… *somebody* has to…"

…

For the next few hours, the two Saiyans once again sparred just like the day before. In the end, they had no choice but to conclude it as another draw due to having both tired themselves out and collapsing at essentially the same time.

"I guess neither of us won this round, huh?" Goku laughed weakly. He was laying on the ground next to him. "Damn and I thought for sure I'd be able to beat you this time…"

"Heh, as if I'd really sit back and let a clown like you stay *ahead* of me..." Vegeta snorted as he slowly moved over to sit up, positioning his back against a tree.

A moment of silence.

"Hey, Vegeta…?"

"Hm?" Vegeta looked over at him. Innocent eyes were observing him.

"Can I… stay with you for a while…?" Goku asked. "I mean at capsule corp. At least until Whis comes back? I… think it would be best if I find some other place to go. I know that Chichi cares about me and all, but… up until just a few days ago, it feels like all we've been doing is arguing anymore, and I'm tired of it. I just… don't want our remaining friendship to be defined by that, you know? I think I need some time away from her."

In the past, he hadn't wanted to, but these events had been some kind of eye-opener for him and he realized he needed to do something about it. He couldn't continue staying in an environment that

was hurting him.

"I understand…" Vegeta said. "To be honest, I had considered asking you about this before, but you were already going through enough as it was, so I wanted to wait a bit before I offered it."

"So then… you're really okay with it?" Goku asked.

Vegeta shrugged somewhat. "Yeah, sure. I guess I don't see why *not*... "

"What about Bulma?" Goku wanted to know. "Do you think she'd mind…?"

"She's actually the one who originally suggested it, so I highly doubt it." Vegeta said. "Besides, you lived with her before, didn't you? When you were kids. She even told me she used to bathe you."

"Yeah, but this is… different. I wouldn't… want to put that on her again." Goku avoided his gaze. "I've already caused her enough trouble as it is…"

"It's no trouble at all, I assure you." Vegeta insisted. "You're free to stay with us as long as you need to. And look at the bright side, Kakarot. With *me* around, you can train as much as you'd like."

Goku smiled. "Alright, if you really think you can handle me…"

Vegeta smirked. "Tch, *please* , I put up with your ass for three whole years in the Hyperbolic Time Chamber *alone, remember?* This is *nothing* ."

Goku couldn't be happier to hear that. "Sounds like a plan then."

…

"You want to stay with us?" Bulma, who was in her lab, looked up to see Goku and Vegeta standing there. She was holding a screwdriver and appeared to be working on some sort of machine.

"Yeah, if it's no problem." Goku awkwardly scratched the back of his head. "It's just a temporary thing, though. I don't want to stay here any longer than I have to. Only until I can figure something else out."

"It's fine, you're welcome to stay here as long as you need to." Bulma said, giving him the same reassurance Vegeta had. "I'll have to hook you up with one of our spare bedrooms, though. Give me a second to find the key."

Bulma walked over and shuffled through her desk, quickly finding what she was looking for.

"Here it is." She handed the key to Vegeta. "Vegeta, you know the bedroom that's two doors down from yours? I want you to take him there. I think there are still some boxes on the bed and floor that need to be brought to storage, but otherwise it should be suitable for sleeping in, so help him help him out, would you?"

Vegeta took the key. "...Yeah."

Neither Bulma nor Goku said much after that, but as Vegeta had grabbed Goku's hand and urged him to follow, Goku could hear Bulma saying to take care of himself. He thanked her.

…

Vegeta led Goku to his destination in silence, unlocking the door with ease before inviting him inside.

"Here we are, If you have any clothes or anything that you'd like to get from Chichi's place, you're free to go and get them whenever. I'm going to move these." He said as he stacked a couple of the large tubs that were sitting on the bed.

"Let me help with that." Goku said, moving over and lifting some boxes of his own.

"Just don't drop any of them, or Bulma will make sure to have your neck for it." Vegeta warned him, heading to the door.

"I know." Goku said. "Thanks again for letting me stay with you."

"It's no problem." Vegeta dismissed. "As long as you keep things neat, we shouldn't have an issue. That also means not leaving trash around like you did in the Time Chamber."

"Hey, that was only a few occasions." Goku pouted.

"A few occasions, my *ass* . I was having to clean up after those blasted cooking experiments of yours *constantly.* Not to mention the sports drink cans I kept finding on the floor near your bed."

Seeing Vegeta's eyes on him, Goku was desperate to change the subject. "Well, at least *one* of us can cook."

A small vein appeared on Vegeta's forehead and he blushed slightly. "Shut up…"

"Oh, hit a nerve, did I?" Goku smirked. "You know it's true."

Vegeta huffed. "*Fine* , I admit you have me bested when it comes to the *kitchen* , Kakarot, Whereas I, on the other hand, can't even cook an *omelet* . There, are you satisfied?"

"Hey, don't put it like that… After my grandpa died, I was left to fend for myself in the wilderness alone as a little boy, so I had no choice but to learn a lot of things the hard way…" Goku gave a slightly downcast look as he reflected on his past, not going unnoticed by Vegeta. "Because of that, it's become a sort of side hobby of mine. I actually asked Chichi to teach me a few things here and there as well, about baking. You know…, I could also teach *you* one day, if you'd be up for it."

"*You* , teach *me* how to *cook*?" Vegeta snorted. "You've got to be joking."

"No, I'm totally *serious* ." Goku insisted, grinning. "I think it would be fun."

It *did* sound like an intriguing offer at the very least, but Vegeta was too prideful to say that out loud. "Tch… Just focus on getting the damn boxes moved already."

Vegeta sped up his pace.

Slowly, they carried the boxes to the storage area that was a few halls down.

Once they were done, Goku sat down on the bed.

"Aren't you going to let the woman know you're staying here?" Vegeta asked, standing in the doorway with his arms folded.

"Yeah, I'll tell her later." Goku said, before turning his face away. "Actually… tomorrow… if you don't mind… I'd like you to go somewhere with me. It's kind of personal."

"Where to?" Vegeta inquired.

"My grandpa's grave… I want to replace the flowers." Goku answered, barely audible. "Tomorrow will be the anniversary of the day he died. Or rather… when he was killed."

Vegeta stiffened in response. This was the second time Goku had mentioned his grandfather today and now it made sense why he looked so troubled. That's when it really began to dawn on him just how much Goku had going on on his plate. It wasn't just the trauma from the rape or divorce that he was dealing with. There was so much more.

He didn't know a lot about Goku's past and he never bothered asking into it. But now Goku seemed to be asking him to be a part of it some way or another. He wasn't entirely sure how to proceed.

"How was he killed…? By who?" He probed, letting his curiosity get the best of him. Immediately afterwards, he got the feeling it was a question he shouldn't have asked. This was none of his

business.

Goku was hesitant for a long moment before answering him. "...It was me. I… crushed him... in the giant ape form."

A deathly silence settled between the two Saiyans after that, and Vegeta felt his hand twitch with unease. In that moment, he had no choice but to acknowledge that it was the Saiyan Biology that was partly to blame for this. The Saiyan Biology which Vegeta was so *proud* of.

There had been times that he missed having his tail and the ability to transform at the full moon. But he also understood fully well the dangers that form possessed - The atrocities it had been used to commit, wiping out entire civilizations in single nights and murdering countless sentient beings. Atrocities which he himself had been a *part* of.

"Grandpa often told me not to look up at the full moon, because there was a monster that would come out." Goku rubbed at his arm. "Like an idiot, I completely ignored his warning and looked at it anyways… When I saw you transform the first time you arrived on earth, that's when I realized it… That the monster he spoke of… was *me* ."

"You're not a monster." Vegeta said, moving towards him with some caution. "Don't… call yourself that."

Slowly, he sat down next to him. "If you want me to come with you, then I *will* , no questions asked."

"You really mean it…?" Goku asked, hopefully.

"We'll go first thing tomorrow morning." Vegeta stroked his cheek, with the smallest of smiles when he saw a wave of relief wash over Goku's face. "We can even get some flowers at the flower shop nearby here. How does that sound?"

"Okay..." Goku tried his best to ignore how close their faces were, suddenly finding his gaze drawn towards Vegeta's lips for some reason, feeling a brief urge to kiss him. As soon as the thought came to him, however, he scolded himself for it, feeling disgusted. He shouldn't be having such thoughts. Especially not now.

Vegeta had picked up on the way Goku was looking at him, recognizing his body language. He swallowed, almost wanting to kiss him as well, but he knew he had to resist. Goku was *vulnerable* , he wasn't in the right state of mind to consent to *anything* .

Revealing his own feelings to him would be selfish and wrong.

"I-" He started to say but a voice interrupted him, startling both him and Goku.

"Hey, Goku! I was wondering if this was a good time to… Oh, sorry… Am I… interrupting something?"

It was Krillin, he had just stepped in the door. How had they been so distracted that they hadn't even noticed his ki?!

Vegeta's ears became red, but he regained his composure within an instant.

"No…" He murmured, getting up. "We actually just finished. I'm going back to my room. Knock if you need anything."

His hand remained on Goku's face for a split second longer before he pulled it back and turned away.

He figured it was probably best if he gave Goku some space to talk with Krillin alone.

Goku didn't say anything, his face and neck feeling too hot for him to think.

"Vegeta didn't do anything weird to you, did he?" Krillin asked when Vegeta was gone, approaching him. It didn't look like anything harmful, but he still had to ask, considering everything Goku had already been through as it was. If anybody was going to make moves on his best friend, Krillin wanted to make sure it was at least *consensual* .

He sat down on the bed beside him.

"Huh? Weird how?" Goku looked over at him.

"Well, I'm no expert, but it kinda looked like he wanted to kiss you just now..." Krillin treaded carefully. "Is that… something you would have been okay with?"

Upon hearing that, Goku started to fidget with his fingers. "I don't know. Do you really think he wanted to? Honestly, I've been having a really hard time figuring him out lately. I wish I knew… what he thought of me."

Krillin paused for a moment. This wasn't what he originally came here to discuss, but this was quickly becoming just as important to him. "...Goku, can I ask you something?"

"What is it…?" Goku gazed over at him.

Krillin swallowed. "How do you… *feel* about Vegeta?"

"...I *like* him. Like really *really* like him." Goku said with confidence after a moment's thought. "In the same way I liked Chichi. He's always looking out for me and taking care of me. Sure, he can be a huge jerk sometimes, but there's something about that energy of his… It's *intoxicating* , especially when he gets all competitive. It makes my heart beat faster just *thinking* about it. Not only that, but he's super smart too. And strong. I already enjoy training and fighting as it is, but being able to *share* that with him… It just… makes me really *happy* ."

Krillin was taken aback for a moment, but the sight was sweet somehow.

"And yet… I'm nervous at the same time." Goku murmured.

"About what?" Krillin encouraged.

"A lot of things…" Goku avoided his gaze. "Like… What if he doesn't feel the same way as me? I don't even know if he's into other guys to begin with."

To Goku, gender was completely irrelevant when he was with Chichi and it was irrelevant *now* as well. He had preferences about body types, sure, but that was more for aesthetic appeal than anything else. Theoretically, he'd date just about anybody if they had the right personality, but he had learned at some point that other people didn't think the same way as him and he could never know if a guy in particular was just being friendly or if he was actually hitting on him.

"Oh, trust me. I know love when I see it and Vegeta is *definitely into* you…" Krillin said with a surprising amount of confidence. "I'm pretty sure that *most* of us can tell by now."

"Maybe, but after what happened, I'm sorta afraid he might want more from me than what I'm comfortable with." Goku muttered, pulling in on himself somewhat.

"Goku… Not everybody is… like the man who assaulted you. Just tell Vegeta you want to take things slowly. He may seem like a scary guy, but I'm sure he'll understand, given how he's reacted to this whole thing *so* far." Krillin reassured him. "And hey, if you don't feel like you're ready to ask him out yet, then that's okay too. It's completely understandable to not want to rush this considering everything you just went through. Just know that whatever you choose to do, I'll support you all the way."

"Thanks, Krillin." Goku smiled softly. "But what did you come here for, anyway?"

"Well, I wanted to check up on you and see how you were doing." Krillin explained.

"I'm… doing fine I guess." Goku said.

"Still having those thoughts?" Krillin inquired. "The ones of suicide?"

"Yeah…" Goku nodded. "But Vegeta wants me to come back to Lord Beerus's world with him. He said it would be a good opportunity to get away for a while. Still… I'm worried about the case… Won't you… need me around…?"

"Well, Bulma has a communicator, doesn't she?" Krillin pointed out. "If anybody has to get up with you, then they can always use that to contact you. We all just want you to take care of *you* right now."

Goku was silent for a long moment, pulling out the objects Vegeta had stuck into his obi because they were starting to protrude against his stomach. He laid them out beside him on the bed.

"Where'd you get those?" Krillin asked.

"Bulma apparently gave them to me, through Vegeta, said they'd help me somehow. I think Vegeta called them… ah… fidgets? I'm not really sure how some random toys could stop me from hurting myself, though. It would feel stupid playing with them for that reason." Goku reflected on it, giving a small pained smile. "Still… He's really *trying*... Yet all I'm doing is making things difficult for him."

He found himself opening up the container of putty out of curiosity and began playing around with it. It was fun to stretch and squish at least.

"When you say… *hurting yourself* , Goku…" Krillin treaded the waters as carefully as possible. "What do you mean by that…?"

"...It's been happening ever since… Since I was raped. Mainly it's just scratching, but last night… I started to get really upset about something and I wasn't really thinking straight. The only thing… I could think to do was to grab something sharp… So I did… I found a box cutter in Vegeta's bathroom and I cut my wrist with it… multiple times. It… kind of helped some…" As he continued, Goku began snapping the putty apart and mixing it back up in quick and aggressive movements, making his frustration with himself obvious. "But Vegeta saw it and took it away from me. He started crying again… Because of me… I don't like it when he cries. Or anybody for that matter. I didn't… mean to worry him like that."

"I know you didn't, you have a good heart, Goku." Krillin said softly. "So if somebody is hurting because of something you did, or even just in general, you're going to feel it." Krillin said. "And this sort of thing… It can be really hard to cope with. For not only you, but the people around you as well… Tell me something. Have you… considered talking with a therapist…?"

"A therapist? What's that?" Goku inquired, his hands calming down somewhat.

He had heard Chichi pass around the word a couple times with Gohan, and he knew it was a person, but he still didn't know much about them. Despite growing up on earth, there were so many things about society that he just didn't keep up with.

Krillin didn't tease him for not knowing.

"A therapist is a sort of… head doctor. One who could talk with you about what you're going through and help you find healthy coping skills to manage your feelings."

"A head doctor, huh…?" Goku pondered it. Putting it like that made it easier to understand. "I don't know… I wouldn't… really comfortable talking about these sorts of things with somebody I've never met before. Besides, you know how I feel about doctors. Me and them… they don't mix."

"And that's completely understandable." Krillin assured him. "It's just something to think about. Even I have one."

"You do?" Goku asked, surprised.

"Yeah… In my line of work, you get to see all *sorts* of things, and let me tell you something. It's not always pretty." Krillin turned his head away. "But still… Having somebody to talk to about it… Helps. I have 18, sure, but I guess I sort of like being able to get an extra opinion."

He then looked over and smirked a bit, holding his hand up to his face like he was whispering to Goku. "Speaking of which, trauma isn't *all* they talk about, you know. You might even be able to ask for *love advice* on *you know who* ."

"You mean Vegeta…?" Goku blushed, fidgeting shyly at the mention. "I guess I *would*... like to understand him a little better. But… Couldn't I just do that by talking with him myself?"

"I suppose you have a point. Not everybody *needs* a therapist. If you don't think you'd be comfortable with it, then it's probably best to avoid it. Nobody's forcing you."

Goku paused for a moment. "I have… been talking to Vegeta some…, about what happened. He's always so confident, like he knows just what to say to make me feel better."

Krillin laughed a bit. "Well, if nothing else, Vegeta *has* always been pretty good with speeches, I'll give him that. He's even given *me* a confidence boost from time to time. I'm just glad that you have somebody who's able to be there for you through this. I really do hope everything works out between you two."

Goku beamed. "Thanks, Krillin."

…

"A shower? But I don't *need* one."

Goku looked up above him at the smaller man who was crossing his arms.

Vegeta had a towel draped around his neck and his hair was still damp from the shower that he himself had taken, so it was laying down somewhat in comparison to its usual spikiness. He was wearing a loser fitted black tank top and a pair of dark blue sweatpants.

"Like hell you don't. If you're going to stay here, the least you can do is wash yourself from time to time. Otherwise, it'll be *me* who Bulma comes after for letting you stink up the building with that putrid odor of yours." Maybe it was Bulma's incessant nagging about his physical hygiene or regularly having to do chores for Whis and Beerus that helped lead him to becoming so studious but Vegeta did at least *try* to keep things sanitary unlike a certain Saiyan that was currently laying in his bed. "I'll bet you haven't bathed *or* changed out of those clothes *once* since the other day, *have* you?"

"Well, *no* , but…" Goku turned his head away.

"Why am I not surprised…?" Vegeta pinched the bridge of his nose slightly. "Alright, take off your clothes."

"What?" Goku uttered, uncomfortable.

"I said take off your clothes, they need to be washed." Vegeta clairfied, vaguely noticing he seemed upset. "You'll just have to wear something else in the meantime."

"You don't mean… you want me to undress in *front* of you, do you…?" Goku asked.

"No, I meant in the *bathroom* . But leave your clothes by the door. Hold on… You didn't… actually think I was…" Vegeta trailed off. Okay, somehow he could understand how such a situation might make Goku uncomfortable, being told to undress so soon after… He sighed, unease in his stomach. He needed to be delicate. "Look… I'm not… going to do anything *weird* to you, if that's what you're worried about…"

"...Fine," Goku replied with a heavy sigh, before getting up. He looked at him a little defensively. "but no peeking."

"I *won't* ." Vegeta assured him, internally groaning. "Just go."

He had wanted Goku to be more modest, sure, but *this* was something else *entirely* .

Another reason to want to *kill* the man who had done this to him.

A few minutes later, Vegeta found himself hearing the sound of the bathroom door closing. Not too long after that, the water started running, and Goku slipped his gi outside of the room.

Vegeta then proceeded to pick the clothing up and headed to the laundry room. After tossing in the clothes and some detergent, it took him a long time of fumbling over the knobs and buttons to remember how the machine even worked. Finally, he figured it out and got it whirring.

After that moment, he let out a breath he didn't know he was holding in and slid down against the washing machine.

"Oh? I don't think I see you washing clothes very often."

A vein popped out on his forehead, when Bulma's voice entered his awareness. She was smirking.

"Shut up…" he muttered. "They're Kakarot's. The woman usually cleans them for him so now *I* have to."

"Oh? That's odd." Bulma said with a giggle, as she sat down next to him. "You know, some of us are starting to think you've fallen in love with him with how you've been taking care of him so much lately."

"What?! Don't be ridiculous!" Vegeta barked. He could feel his face flushing. Why did Bulma have to *be* like this? "How the hell could I… fall in love with a third class clown like *him*... ?! He's… *like a child* …! It's *infuriating!* And-damn it, Bulma, would you stop snickering about it?! You're not helping the situation!"

He *did* love Goku, but he was still too afraid to say it out loud. Yet he was failing miserably at denying it.

"Aww, Vegeta, you don't have to be so embarrassed about it." Bulma said with a smirk, seeing straight through his act. She poked Vegeta's face, trying to get under his skin.

"I'm not embarrassed." Vegeta denied.

" *Sure* you're not." Bulma said, smiling. She continued prodding at his cheek, trying to keep her laughter in check.

"Stop it! I said *stop it* !" Vegeta snapped, lightly slapping her hand away. He had rarely ever felt this flustered before. "Just shut up and drop it already. I've had enough of your incessant teasing me for one day."

Suddenly, it seemed like he was sulking.

"Okay, okay. I'll stop for now..." Bulma conceded, as she started to get up.

At that moment, Vegeta spoke up.

"Wait, Bulma. Whatever you do, just… don't let Kakarot know… that I *like* him…" He told her, looking away. "After what happened, I'm afraid… that if he finds out, he won't… *trust* me anymore."

"Don't worry, I won't tell him." Bulma assured him a small smile, before she left him to his thoughts.

…

Once Vegeta returned to Goku's bedroom with his cleaned - and now dried - clothes in hand, finding that Goku was already laying in his bed and had fallen asleep.

Vegeta placed the clothing on the dresser before moving over closer towards him.

He reached out towards one of Goku's arms, noticing he still had his wrist cuffs on. This might be an invasion of privacy, but he knew he needed to find out.

Slipping back one of the wrist cuffs, he checked Goku's skin over for new cuts, before looking at the other one as well. Goku had removed the bandage wrap from before, but fortunately there didn't appear to be any new injuries or cuts, for *the time being* , anyways.

He let out a small shaky sigh of relief, but down deep he knew his wasn't over. This sort of thing didn't just go away.

Dealing with this would require vigilance and persistence.

…

That night, Goku found himself waking up from yet another nightmare, but this was about something completely separate from the assault. Memories he had buried in the back of his mind for years, but had been popping up more and more frequently as of late, serving as one of the many factors in his thoughts of suicide.

His grandpa. The gentle old man who had taken him in as a baby and raised him.

That kind smile popped into his head and within a split second, the last thread holding him together snapped completely.

He started crying.

Again .

Before a few days ago, Goku rarely *ever* shed tears, but now he'd been doing it so often that he didn't even feel like the same person anymore.

And he hated it, but he couldn't control it.

Images he had tried so hard to forget came crashing back to him in an instant, hitting him like bricks.

His grandfather's smashed body.

His blood.

The lifeless look in his eyes.

*It was all my fault… I'm the one who did that… The one who **killed** him… After everything he did for me.*

None of that would have happened if I had just done what I was told that night. If I hadn't looked up at the full moon and I just stayed in bed, he wouldn't have been crushed by that thing.

*I didn't **know…** !*

Goku usually didn't think about these things, nor did he like to. For the most part, he wanted to say he had moved on. However, there were times, like these, that he found himself hit with the harsh reality of it all over again.

And it hurt so much more than he could even comprehend, just knowing that, all along, it was his own transformation that had *caused* it.

Even if he is happier where he is, he should have been able to live out the last of his years on earth peacefully, not have them stolen from him in a single night by being trampled to death.

Never .

That was one thing Goku would probably never be able to truly forgive himself for. He just couldn't.

Not even if his grandfather *had* .

I shouldn't be alive right now… Everybody I care about, they're always getting killed or hurt because of me.

Even my own sons… Especially Gohan…

Chichi was right about me. Right about everything.

Maybe I should just go through with it after all… It'll be better for everybody.

No…

I can't… think like this…

Vegeta told me… to come to him… when I felt this way…

I want to be next to him…

Getting up, he tried to wipe the moisture from his eyes, but more kept forming. He sniffled and walked over to Vegeta's room.

Vegeta had said to knock, so that's what he did.

But he was afraid to speak.

What if Vegeta doesn't want to be disturbed right now?

Maybe I'm just being selfish. I should just-

As the doubts began to consume him, the door suddenly opened and Vegeta was standing there.

"What do you want? Do you have any idea what time it-?" He spoke in a groggy voice, but that's when it dawned on him that it was Goku. "Kakarot…? What's wrong…?"

"I…" Goku couldn't even manage a word without his voice cracking. Without really thinking about what he was doing, he reached out and hugged Vegeta, his body shaking. "I don't want to be *alone*

right now... Please… Can I… sleep with *you* instead…?"

Vegeta's eyes widened at the request, he reached up and softly returned it.

"Of course..."

…

The next morning, Vegeta did exactly what he promised.

He brought Goku to the flower shop and let him pick out a small vase of flowers, containing white roses and Hibiscus.

Goku hadn't said much since coming into his room last night. It was quite frankly worrying him, seeing him so quiet, but Vegeta could guess why.

Goku's grandfather's grave was in an area not too far from the house where Goku had grown up with him in. There were trees surrounding it and it was shaded, but the spot was recognizable by the large stick that was protruding out of the ground. Even after all these years it had still managed to survive somehow.

"Here it is." Goku kneeled down in front of it, not hesitating to put the vase of flowers down next to it.

Vegeta quietly observed him, allowing him this moment to himself.

"Did you know?" Goku started in a low voice. "They say the hibiscus is a flower that connects our world and the next. That's why they're so often put on people's graves and in cemeteries. They invite happiness to the afterlife. They're also called Gusobana… or the flower of the next life."

"I wasn't aware." Vegeta wanted to say more but he had no idea what. Instead, he just opted to sit down beside him.

"...A long time ago, when I was still a kid, Baba actually brought my grandpa back for a day and I got to spar with him for a while. I wanted to bring him back again using the Dragon Balls, but he told me no. That he was happy where he was." Goku grabbed a nearby weed, plucking it out of the ground. "I'm a bit surprised he didn't resent me over what had happened… Most people would have…"

Vegeta watched him playing around with the weed, allowing him to continue.

"...I often think… if I had just listened to him and stayed in bed like I was told to that night… He wouldn't have been killed…" Goku ripped up the weed, bit by bit. "And it terrifies me sometimes… just knowing the *thing* that crushed him was a *part* of me…"

"Kakarot…" Vegeta painfully reached a hand towards Goku's shoulder. He was trembling.

Who could have guessed that he's been living with this guilt for all these years?

He said he first realized it after I arrived on earth and transformed. So could that be when all of this first started…? Was him choosing to stay dead after the fight with Cell really all on a whim to keep earth safe, after all? Or was there so much more to it than that? ***Thoughts…*** *that he had been bottling up* ***inside*** *of him… Ones that he's never spoken of to* ***anybody*** *before…*

Until ***now*** *...*

"I… can still see it sometimes… His trampled body… His blood- it was *everywhere* …" Goku stifled a sob. "When I saw him lying there like that, I just kept shaking him and calling out for him to respond, trying to get him to open his eyes or *say something* , but he wouldn't… If I had known back then… that I was the *cause* of that, then I would have…"

"You what have *what* ?" Vegeta pressed, concern obvious in his tone. He placed a hand on Goku's when he saw him reaching for his wrist. He moved it down to the ground between them, intertwining their fingers in the process to keep him grounded. "Kill yourself so you could have died alongside him…? Is *that* what you were going to say…?"

It was only a wild guess, but his heart dropped when Goku stiffened and turned his head away, unable to even deny it.

Vegeta's breath hitched at that, his words catching in his throat when Goku suddenly uttered something that completely destroyed him:

"...I shouldn't… be alive right now."

"What? *No* , don't *think* like that." Vegeta's voice was strained as he continued. "You didn't… *know* . You weren't even *aware* , or *conscious* when it happened. You were but a *child* , with no recollection or knowledge of your origins whatsoever and, if he truly loved you as you say he did, then he wouldn't have wanted you to beat yourself up over this."

"I know that… But I just… really miss him sometimes, you know?" Tears clung to Goku's eyes and his voice was barely above a whisper. "I try not to let these things bother me, and usually it doesn't, but… there are these times, out of nowhere, that it… hits me… all over again, and I…"

"It's… *hard* , I know… I understand fully well what it's like… to *lose* somebody…" Vegeta mumbled. "...He… must have been a kind man for you to have been this attached to him."

Goku was quiet for a moment after hearing that. "He was… He's the closest thing I ever had to a family growing up. We weren't blood related, sure, but still… he… basically raised me… as if I were his very own grandson. He's the nicest person I've ever known…"

"That probably explains where you get that merciful nature of yours from too." Vegeta said.

Goku adjusted his hand slightly. "It's actually sort of funny..."

"What is?" Vegeta inquired.

"...I don't really remember any of it, but… before I fell on my head as a baby, I was apparently… super violent. Yet he took me in anyways and looked after me, both before and after." Goku

laughed, nervously. "It's… almost scary to imagine what I might have been like right now if I *hadn't* hit my head. Maybe I'm only… nice like this because of brain damage. That could also be why I'm so… *different* from other people as well... And why I'm always… screwing things up..."

"Even so, I kind of *prefer* you this way… I'm not very fond of the idea of you becoming cruel, like *I* was…" Vegeta looked away with a small blush. "As you are now, you have so many unique qualities about you that most Saiyan men *lack*... It's *alluring."*

He didn't know what came over him. He let the words slip out without even thinking about it, but it was true. It was simply how he *felt* and he wanted to say it.

At that moment, Vegeta nervously started using his thumb to fidget with Goku's hand, but Goku didn't know how to respond at first.

Alluring? Vegeta's never said anything like that about me before. Is he… just being nice? Or does he really like me, after all…? No, I'm probably just misunderstanding again.

"There… are a lot of good things about *you* too…" he murmured, in a low voice. "You've changed a lot, over these years… You might even be more *human* than *I* am in some ways."

"Hmph. That's partly *your* doing, you know…" Vegeta grunted.

"It is? But what did *I* do?" Goku quipped in confusion.

"It's… nothing… Forget it." Vegeta dismissed it within seconds.

"No, *tell* me!" Goku pressed with a smirk, as he moved closer to get a better look at his face. "I wanna know what you were gonna *say* ."

"I told you already it's nothing, so just drop it, you idiot..." Vegeta lightly pushed him away, before he got up. "I'm done here. You're free to stay here as long as you like to."

"Vegeta? I…" Goku started to say. He hesitated a moment to gather his thoughts. "...Thank you… For coming here with me, I mean..."

Vegeta paused, his back facing Goku. For a while he said nothing, until finally:

"...I'm sure your grandfather would be proud of you right now if he could see how strong of a warrior you've become. Still… He wouldn't want you to give up. You must find a way to keep moving forward… For *all* of us, but especially *yourself* …"

Before Goku could even respond, Vegeta had already flown off, leaving him by himself.

Goku covered his mouth with his hand, trying to fight off the sobs that slowly began to wrack his body.

…

Several weeks went by, and Goku continued to have nightmares and relapses, much to the growing concern of Vegeta.

Instead of continuing to rely on paper printouts, Vegeta started using Bulma's computer to do his searches into potential ways to help him. It granted him access to a wider range of resources, and, while he was fully aware it wasn't a permanent solution, it at least helped him understand Goku's situation a bit more.

He had learned that speaking calmly was the best approach to getting Goku to stop hurting himself. But it still wasn't easy. Vegeta wasn't by any means a patient person or even really that gentle, so this whole situation was a lot to deal with, especially since he was the only one really working with Goku on these things. He occasionally got advice from Bulma and online doctors but that was it.

"Kakarot… We've *talked* about this. You use your *putty* when you feel this way, *not your nails*. Here…" Vegeta said one day as he tried his best to talk Goku down from a particularly bad panic attack. He pulled out the ball of putty from its container, offering it to Goku.

"No, it's not enough…" Goku rejected it, curling in on himself. He had fallen into the habit of shutting out his surroundings and detaching himself when he got upset.

"Well, do you want one of your *other* fidgets?" Vegeta offered, before pulling out the Rubik's cube. "What about your cubes? You like *this* one, don't you? How about I mix it up again so you can solve it?"

"I said *no* , I don't want it." Goku muttered.

"Alright, then, what *do* you want…?" Vegeta strained to ask, returning the objects to the bed. "What can I do right now to make this better for you…?"

"I don't know…"

"Do you want to go somewhere?"

"Not really…"

"Do you want to spar?"

"..."

"Do you… want me to hold you…?"

"...Maybe."

With Goku's go-ahead, Vegeta did just that, pulling the other Saiyan into an embrace in hopes it would console him somehow. "...Is that better?"

"A little bit… Yeah."

Goku buried his head against Vegeta's shoulder.

"Now… Are you going to tell me what upset you?" Vegeta already had his doubts he was going to get an answer.

"I don't want to talk about it..." Goku's voice was barely above a whisper.

Vegeta felt his heart breaking in response. He let out a shaky breath.

"Kakarot… You can't keep… bottling these things up. It's *destroying* you." He let out a shaky breath. "I want to help you, but I can't *do* that if you don't let me know what's going on…"

"I'm sorry…"

"Don't apologize. I get that this is difficult for you." Vegeta then began to wonder exactly what he could do at this point. "Do you… think you would be able to open up if we got somebody who specializes in dealing with these things…? Like a therapist?"

"...I don't know. I'm… afraid…" Goku couldn't face him.

"Of what?" Vegeta urged in a soft voice.

"That they'll judge me…" Goku reached up and clutched at his shirt slightly.

"Nobody is going to judge you." Vegeta assured him, playing with his hair. "I won't let them be rude to you."

Goku felt himself relax somewhat at the touch, melting in his warmth. "You're… the only person I really feel comfortable talking about these things with, and even then… it's still hard sometimes."

"I understand… I'm not going to force you." Vegeta assured him. "We'll… figure this out. Whatever it takes."

"Vegeta, I want to go back to Lord Beerus's world, and train with Whis some more..." Goku nearly whispered.

"Of course." Vegeta uttered, hugging against him as if his very life depended on it. "If that's what you want, then we'll go there."

…

Before Goku and Vegeta could contact Whis, however, Goku was approached at the last minute by detective Fran, who wanted him to come back to the police department for a photo lineup.

They first had him look at eight photos of different men, but, much to his frustration, his memories were fuzzy at best.

The one photo that bore any similarities - the photo Goku kept having them come back to - was of an older man probably in his late 50s or early 60s, but it was strange because Goku remembered him looking much younger. Granted, he hadn't really looked at Allan's face much even as that stuff was going on. In the end, he had no choice but to put the photo as a 60%-70% chance out of 100%.

Afterwards, they had him repeat the process with photos of pills. The first one he was able to recognize with absolute certainty - a blue capsule with a strange symbol that favored three heads. There were also two white pills in the bunch, one with 70% certainty, and the other smaller one with 30% percent certainty.

He only wished he could remember these things for certain. He cursed his memories for being so *hazy* .

…

"What is this? Some kind of a leaf?" Beerus deadpanned as he stared at the small green sheet in his hand.

"Apparently, it's called seaweed, My Lord." Whis explained. "It's a type of plant that comes from the ocean. They cut it into small portions like that and roast it. But don't let the size fool you, the flavor is actually quite intense."

Goku and Vegeta watched him, hoping more than anything that the delicacy would suffice. Whis had agreed to train them, but it was ultimately up to Beerus if the food sufficed.

"Hey, Vegeta, are you sure this is going to be enough to satisfy him…?" Goku hissed at him, barely above a whisper as he clung to his shoulder from behind. "It doesn't seem like much to *me* ."

"How should *I* know? Whis seemed like he was enjoying it, so I'm sure we'll be fine. Just keep quiet already and *watch* ." Vegeta scolded him. "And stop *clinging* to me."

Except Goku refused to move, keeping his hold on him. He pouted. "Fine, but just remember this was all *your* idea, so don't start blaming *me* if he gets mad."

"Idiot. If he doesn't like it, he'll blame *both* of us." Vegeta pointed out, starting to pull away. He immediately stopped in his tracks when he heard Beerus speak back up.

"Hey, what are you two yammering on about over there?" Beerus narrowed his eyes suspiciously towards them. "Is there something wrong with these?"

Both Vegeta and Goku shuttered in response.

"No, of course not, Lord Beerus!" Vegeta insisted. "They are like nothing you've ever tried before, in a *good* way, I assure you!!"

Maybe it was an exaggeration, but it would hopefully at least keep his attention.

"For your sake, I would certainly *hope* so." Beerus duly noted, finally taking a bite.

After a second, his eyes lit up.

"Mm. Thin and crispy. Ah, but what is this seasoning? It's rather tasty." Beerus noted, before quickly scarfing down piece after piece.

"I believe they refer to it as Umami." Whis said. "But they also come in different flavors. This one is regular sea salt."

"I want more. Now. One pack had better not be all you brought." Beerus eyed him suspiciously.

"You needn't worry, My Lord. There are plenty more from where that came from so feel free to help yourself." Whis smiled, waving his staff a bit. All of a sudden, a pile of seaweed packs dropped down in front of him.

"Oh, man, you're a lifesaver." Beerus said, already tearing into more of them.

The two Saiyans that were watching from a distance sighed in relief when they saw that Beerus seemed content.

…

Training with Whis was exhausting, as always. He always pushed them to their absolute limit and cut no corners while doing so. But Vegeta and Goku liked it that way, it was the only way they could truly get stronger.

"I think that's enough for today, boys. You should probably go and get some rest now." Whis said, before healing them. Their clothes were once again back to normal and no longer tattered.

"Wow, even though I've been healed, I *still* feel exhausted. That's how I *know* I'm getting stronger." Goku smiled, pumping his fists with excitement. "I can't wait to do this again tomorrow."

"Why are you *like* this…?" Vegeta mumbled, snorting at his enthusiasm. He liked fighting, sure, but Goku's energy levels were something else entirely. Still, at the very least, it was endearing to see him so *happy* over it.

"Anyways, I think I'm gonna go to bed now. See you later, Whis." Goku smiled. However, as he started to walk off, Whis called out to him.

"Goku, wait, I'd like to have a word with you if I may." Whis said.

"What is it? Can't it wait?" Goku asked, becoming antsy.

"I couldn't help but notice you've seemed a bit distracted today. Not that it's any of my business, but is something bothering you?"

Vegeta glanced over at the Angel when he asked Goku that. It was rare for him to display *anything* mirroring concern.

"Oh uh, No, it's… nothing." Goku had to flinch slightly when Whis reached up to pluck a leaf out of his hair. "I'm totally fine, never better… I-uh really should go now."

"Very well, as you wish." Whis conceded, apparently deciding not to press him any further.

Before Whis could even say anything, Goku ran off in a hurry.

"What in the world has gotten *into* him…?" He wondered out loud. "Vegeta, do *you* know?"

"It's... a *personal* matter." Vegeta responded, as politely as possible. "I'm not at liberty to talk about it."

"I see. Is that so?" Whis mused, but it was almost impossible to know for sure what he was thinking.

"By the way, I have a favor to ask, if you don't mind." Vegeta suddenly asked.

"My, *you* asking for a favor from *me* ? Isn't *this* rare." Whis raised an eyebrow, somehow amused.

Vegeta completely held back his irritation at being teased. "I'd like you to make another outfit for Kakarot like the one you gave him before."

"Why?" Whis probed. "Did something happen to the other one? I noticed he hasn't been wearing it."

"It was… taken from him." Vegeta mumbled.

"As in stolen? How strange. I can't really see why somebody would go through the effort of stealing somebody's clothing." Whis mused.

"No, it's… not like that. The hospital has it… They… needed it for something." Vegeta explained vaguely.

"Well, whatever the case, I'd be *happy* to make him a new one." Whis smiled.

"You would?" Vegeta looked genuinely happy in response. "Thank you so much."

Whis looked a bit surprised in response to his enthusiasm, but responded with ease.

"It's no trouble at all, I assure you. Now then, you're welcome to stay here if you like but, if you'll excuse me, I really must be going… Good night." Whis dismissed himself.

Vegeta bowed, before following where Goku ran off to.

…

Goku was already laying down on his bed when Vegeta entered their shared bedroom.

"Kakarot…" he said, hesitantly, approaching him.

Goku didn't respond.

"Hey..." Vegeta spoke again, this time sitting down next to him on the bed. "Is there something you need to talk about…? Something… bothering you?"

"I'm fine…" Goku mumbled dismissively, but he was looking away. "Jus' tired."

Vegeta could tell he was lying. He sighed, not wanting to put any pressure on him. He reached up towards Goku's head, but stopped himself to ask permission first. "May I…?"

Goku gave a small nod in response.

Vegeta started playing with Goku's hair, smiling softly when he saw the other Saiyan attempt to hide a blush.

"I asked Whis to make you a new outfit…" He said. "It won't be the exact same one, but it should be just as good as the one you had before, if not better."

"You didn't have to do that." Goku replied in a low voice. "But still… thank you…"

"It's no problem. Just remember if you need anything, I'm here, alright?"

"Okay." Goku responded, closing his eyes.

Vegeta swallowed, some part of him wishing the other man would say more. Still, at least he seemed to be relaxing somewhat. This was better than nothing.

After a minute or so of continuing to brush his hair, he finally got up, walking over to his own bed. He looked over to watch Goku sleep. At some point, however, he found himself dozing off, only to be awakened by a loud thump and the sound of stifled sobbing coming from the other side of the room.

He opened his eyes to see Goku pacing back and forth.

It must have been another nightmare. They had been plaguing Goku's sleep frequently, which appeared to have been the primary cause of most of his breakdowns.

"...Kakarot?" Vegeta drawled, sitting up.

"Huh?" Goku paused to glance at him, seeming startled, but he once again turned away almost immediately after. He was obviously on edge.

"What's wrong?" Vegeta knew the look on Goku's face all too well by now. "Was it another nightmare?"

That's when he noticed that Goku's other hand was clutching onto something, some sort of metal object. He didn't even want to imagine what it might be.

"I… Yeah, um… it's the nightmares," Goku's voice was strained, it seemed like he was still in a disoriented state of mind. "I need a moment to calm down…"

"A moment to calm down" accompanied by Goku going into a bathroom were never a good pair. Vegeta had learned this the hard way.

"What?? No, no no no," Right as soon as Goku started heading off towards the bathroom, Vegeta immediately rushed over and stood in his way, becoming panicked. He gently placed a hand against his chest to turn him around. "Come here. You're not going anywhere right now. Why don't we just sit back down and talk about this? There, you go..."

Goku continued to fidget with the metal object in his hand, clasping it like his life depended on it.

"Mind showing me what you're holding…?" Vegeta reached towards his hand.

Goku started to pull his hand away but Vegeta caught it, forcing him to unclasp his fingers and take the object out of his grasp.

" *Kakarot*... " Vegeta was speechless for a moment. It was a *pocket knife* . Goku must have found it in his room back on earth and brought it with him.

"I…" Goku had no response.

"You *what*...?" When Vegeta noticed Goku's eyes filling with tears once more, he sighed, putting the knife down beside him. "You were about to *hurt yourself* again, weren't you? And with *my* knife."

"No…" Goku denied, looking away.

"Stop lying to me. Tell me the truth." Vegeta *knew* the truth, but he wanted Goku to be honest with him. "What were you about to *do* just now…?"

Quite frankly, he felt like he was at the end of his line, fearing gripping at him. What if he hadn't woken up just now? There was nothing Vegeta had been more terrified of than the thought of waking up one morning and finding Goku unconscious in a pile of his own blood.

"It's… I'm *trying my best* , Vegeta… I'm trying not to *think* this way, but these *thoughts* , and the *memories.* They keep coming *back* to me… and I just… I don't know what else to do." Goku started shaking, letting his leg bounce. "I know you're probably getting tired of me by now, for not being able to handle this better. I keep slipping up and doing the same thing again. I hate this. I hate myself for not being able to just *move on* ."

Vegeta opened his mouth to speak up, but was cut off.

"Something is *wrong with me* , like *really* wrong.…" Goku anxiously bit his lip. "Normal people don't *do* this sort of thing…"

"Do you want to know what's *not normal*?" Vegeta challenged. "It's *me*. Trying to take over your planet all those years ago and helping Nappa kill your friends. Allowing Babidi to take control of my mind so I could betray the people I cared about, even *you*... And yet despite that, despite *everything*, you not only *spared my life*, but you even *forgave me*, no matter *how many* times I screwed up, so tell me… How could I *possibly* even *think* to judge you over something like this…? I *couldn't*... Not in a million years…"

"Don't you think I'm becoming too much to handle, though…?" Goku didn't want to think about it, but it was still weighing on him. "That's why you've suggested I should see a therapist…"

"I…" Vegeta treaded carefully, massaging Goku's hand in an attempt to relax him. "I just… want what's best for you right now, and what's *best for you* might not be something I'm even *capable* of providing. You need *help*... Like *professional* help, from a doctor or something…"

"...A doctor isn't going to be able to *fix* this…" Goku weakly argued.

"You don't *know* that." Vegeta tried.

"Yes, I do. They'll just make me take a bunch of pills." Goku didn't even want to consider it. "That's what doctors *do* ."

"Not *all* doctors…" Vegeta corrected. "And even the ones who *do* - they can't force you to take something you don't want. They'd talk with you first and get to know you better. The nightmares, the panic attacks, even the self-harm and thoughts of suicide… a good doctor would take all of

these things into careful consideration before making that decision. My guesses are they'd probably give you something for sleep and anxiety to help prevent your nightmares."

"Yeah, but what if they give me something like what that man gave me and it leaves me so out of it that I can't even *defend* myself?" Goku retorted.

"Well…" Vegeta considered his response. Admittedly, it was a valid concern. "In the unlikely scenario that it *does* come to that, then *I* will defend you..."

Goku was quiet after that. Uncertain.

"Look, I know you're scared… You're afraid that the same thing is going to happen to you again. Or that *I* might do something, But I swear to you that you are *safe* with me. And a true Saiyan *never* breaks his word." Vegeta assured him, tightening his grip on Goku's hand. "You're not… alone in this…"

Goku had no response, but Vegeta could tell he was considering it.

…

A month passed.

Goku's mental state had remained overall stagnant. He did just fine training - minus for a few panic attacks where Vegeta had to personally calm him down with Whis present to witness the whole fiasco - but the nightmares hadn't gotten any better. And much to Vegeta's frustration and heartbreak, Goku always seemed to completely shut down anymore when the topics of the sexual assault and self-harm were brought up.

Vegeta also had a nagging suspicion that Goku had been hurting himself somewhere else like his legs or thighs, but checking without any proof would be crossing over a line that quite frankly Vegeta didn't feel comfortable with, knowing fully well that Goku likely wouldn't take kindly to being asked to expose skin like that.

…

Whis had given Goku a new outfit, one that was almost identical to the one he had made before, the only difference now being that Goku continued insisting on wearing his blue undershirt with it. It surprised Whis a bit, but he didn't question it too much since Goku still seemed happy with the new outfit.

…

When they weren't training together, Goku and Vegeta were always either eating, resting or doing chores. Except Goku had a bad habit of *slacking off* when it came to chores, like right now.

He was supposed to be sweeping but he had stopped, leaving Vegeta to pick up the slack.

As he stood there, he found his eyes had started to wander, admiring Vegeta's profile as he watched him. He had actually been finding himself doing this *frequently* lately.

Goku had never really felt attraction to people in the *carnal* way that others did - he had learned this while being with Chichi - but he could still find people *attractive* and to him Vegeta was no exception. He was a *beautiful* man. Everything *about* him was perfect.

In that moment, some part of him wanted to reach out and touch him, to *kiss* him even, and be kissed ***by*** him.

And yet… to have such thoughts suddenly made him feel ashamed, and vulnerable.

He was *filthy* . There was no way Vegeta would *ever* want *anything* to do with him like that, not after knowing what had happened to him.

But even if there *was* a chance that he *did* return his feelings, what *then* ? Why even think about that stuff when he knew he wasn't in any *place* to?

Maybe because the *idea* of it seemed nice in prospect, but when it actually came down to it, the reality was much different. His feelings for Vegeta *were* still there, none of *that* had changed, but sex in itself was another story entirely and he didn't even want to *think* about it, not after what Allan had done to him. But a relationship required that, didn't it? It *required* him to do those things. Things he might not ever be comfortable with again.

Before this whole thing, he had always been somewhat neutral on sex. It wasn't that he could never enjoy it, but his drive for it was low, so low in fact that even Chichi had to question it. He had thought it was normal to not want that sort of thing all the time, but apparently it wasn't.

Even so, she never pressured him into anything he wasn't comfortable with and gave him the space to make those decisions for himself. She always asked what he was and wasn't okay with and actually *worked* with him.

More than anything, Goku had loved her and he loved making her happy, so he hadn't minded it.

It was *consensual* .

But what Allan had done to him *wasn't* .

Now that that choice of consent had been taken from him, he was terrified that the same thing would be done to him *again* .

But Vegeta promised he wouldn't and Goku wanted to believe him. Part of him *did* . Still, he could never be for certain and that thought alone terrified him.

Besides, he didn't even know how Vegeta felt about him. Krillin said Vegeta liked him, but he wasn't so sure. He didn't want to risk ruining what they already had by making things awkward between them.

He was *afraid* to tell him, for *multiple* reasons.

"What is it?" Vegeta glanced over his shoulder to gaze at him, interrupting his thoughts. "What are you staring at me for…?"

When their eyes met, Goku awkwardly looked away, blushing with a mix of embarrassment and shame. "Oh, uh… It's nothing, sorry."

Vegeta raised an eyebrow. *What's with him?*

He decided not to question it for the time being and turned his attention back to sweeping. "Then get back to sweeping, already."

"I know…" Goku sighed. "This always feels like so much trouble, though. We do these things every day."

"Well I, for one, have no *issue* keeping up with it." Vegeta boasted. "The only problem here is that you're just lazy. Admit it."

"I can't help it. I just prefer actual training over this stuff, ya know? It makes me antsy." Goku groaned, but he continued sweeping anyway.

"Hmph." Vegeta huffed but turned his focus on the pile of dust and sand that he had gathered.

...

Goku was looking at Vegeta again and Vegeta could *feel* it. It was driving him *crazy*.

He had just taken a shower and his hair was dripping wet. He wasn't wearing a shirt - on occasion, he felt more comfortable sleeping without one.

"Is there a *reason* you keep staring at me? You've been doing that all day." He said, glancing over his shoulder at him and deadpanned. "Do I have something on my face?"

Goku jolted slightly on the bed when he realized he had been caught sneaking glances at him yet *again* .

"N-no. It's nothing." He nervously turned away as soon as their eyes met. He seemed anxious, and upset, more so than earlier. "I'm going to sleep now…"

"Kakarot, if there's something you need to say, then just…" Vegeta placed an arm on the other side of Goku and leaned over him, pulling him back by his shoulder to get him to look at him. He started to trail off into silence when he saw the distraught expression on Goku's face. "...say it."

"Vegeta…" Goku gazed into the eyes of the man above him, his heart anxiously pounding in his chest. He swallowed. "What do you… *see*... when you look at me…?"

Vegeta was silent for a long time as that question sunk in.

"...What do I see...?" His eyes slightly narrowed in confusion. He was genuinely at a loss of words for a moment. "Well… this is an odd question… Why are you asking…?"

"I mean…" As Vegeta's body loomed over Goku's, their faces only a few inches apart, Goku wasn't even sure how to put everything going on in his head into words. "What do you *think* of me? Knowing what he *did* to me? And the things he made me *do* ? Don't you... find me *repulsive*... ?"

"What? I-" Vegeta was stunned that Goku would even *make* such a suggestion. "You can't be *serious* right now… I would *never* ."

"...My *body* …" Goku's voice cracked as several tears rolled down his cheeks. "It's *filthy* ."

"You're not filthy and I don't find you *repulsive*... You didn't *choose* for that to happen." Vegeta spoke gently, stroking Goku's cheek. Fingers gently brushed his skin to wipe away the tears. A fresh reminder of how broken, innocent and hurt he still was. "Actually… Do you… want me to be honest with you…?"

Goku quietly nodded a confirmation.

Vegeta's heart rate accelerated just a bit as he started feeling the other man's warmth.

"I think..." He was quiet for a moment, swallowing. Was this really the right time to say this? He didn't know, but he couldn't just sit back and listen to Goku say such awful things about himself. He *refused* to. "You are *beautiful,* Kakarot. A *remarkable* Saiyan *warrior*... But also one… who was *hurt* and *taken advantage of*, by a sick *depraved* individual. And your body alone… What he did to it… that does not and *will* not *ever define* who you are. You are a *survivor*. And *strong*. I… *admire* you…"

Vegeta had no apologies for using the word "beautiful", because it was *true* , and he meant it with every single fiber of his being.

More tears welled up in Goku's eyes but he didn't say anything.

Vegeta took that as his go-ahead to continue.

"Believe me, I get what you're afraid of… I *understand* it-" he knew all too well, and it tore him apart. "-and I would *never* … think less highly of you because of that. I wouldn't… *hurt* you the way *he* did. I would do everything I could… to make you happy. But… I realize you're not ready for that… Maybe you'll *never* be, and, if so… I'm okay with that. I just… want you to know that I will always be here for you, *regardless* how you see me…"

"Vegeta… I…" Goku whispered weakly as he stared into Vegeta's eyes for any sign of dishonesty, but found none.

To be spoken to so gently by the Saiyan above him, who was usually so full of disdain or arrogance… he had no clue how to even respond or process it.

Had Vegeta… just *confessed* to him? Or was he misunderstanding his words entirely? He didn't know. But if it was true…

He felt a lump in his throat now, his eyes wet. He was trembling, still, and wanted nothing more than a moment where he could just *breathe* without a flood of memories or thoughts running through his mind.

"It's alright…" Vegeta assured him, a hand running through his hair, not wanting to overwhelm him. "This doesn't have to change anything between us if you don't *want* it to. I just… thought it would be better if I was… honest about it instead of hiding it, so that way you know how I feel…"

"I… like you *too* …" Goku said with hesitation as he averted his gaze with a mix of pain in his eyes. "I really *do* and I want to be with you, but…"

"...I understand… You don't… need to worry…" Vegeta didn't require a verbal explanation, just grateful to hear that Goku actually returned his feelings. "I'm not… going to force you to do anything you're not comfortable with… We'll go at *your* pace. Whatever you need…"

"...I… Can I… kiss you?" Goku asked hesitantly, a small blush covering his cheeks. His grip was now on the other Saiyan's hand that was resting on his face. Despite every ounce of anxiety that he felt, he truly wanted this. "...Please, Vegeta... Can I…?"

Vegeta's hand traveled down, fingers cupping the Saiyan's chin.

"Yes… You may," He answered gently before he leaned forward and tenderly pressed their lips together. The kiss was soft, and Vegeta's lips were warm. The sensation sent a wave of heat all throughout Goku's body, throughout *both* of their bodies. Goku closed his eyes, simply enjoying the contact.

The kiss wasn't by any means deep - it was rather chaste in nature - but, even so, it was more than enough to convey what Vegeta was feeling, and how much he truly cared for him.

After a moment, his neck and ears burning up, Vegeta pulled back to look at him. The other Saiyan's cheeks were flushed, his eyelids half-lidded and by the look on his face… Vegeta could tell that he was nervous.

But it wasn't from discomfort. Goku had genuinely enjoyed it, and that fact alone set Vegeta's heart ablaze.

The fact that Goku was willing to *accept* his love, even if it *was* just through a kiss, was more than he could have possibly asked for.

Careful not to scare him, he leaned down and kissed him once more, this time with the same amount of passion, but more intensity, begging for entrance to Goku's mouth…

Goku accepted readily, wrapping his arms around Vegeta's neck and letting him take control. This time, at least for a moment, there was no hesitation, no nervousness, and no fear.

Vegeta took that as permission to deepen the kiss, exploring each and every crevice of Goku's mouth as he savored the lingering taste of carrots and ramen from their dinner earlier.

He had to restrain himself from letting his hands roam Goku's body, not sure what he would be okay with and afraid it would overwhelm him. As their tongues danced in and out of each other's mouths, Vegeta slowly became more and more aware of his body heat, and eventually he had to pull away, meeting his eyes again.

A small strand of saliva broke between them when they parted, their faces flushed. Vegeta could see that Goku was gasping for air, and he had to admit that he was, too.

Goku felt dizzy, and his heart was racing, his chest rising and falling rapidly due to the pressure.

"How was that…?" Vegeta wiped away the drool from the corner of his mouth. "Did you like that?

"Mhm." Goku nodded, swallowing shyly.

"You sure…?" Vegeta had to make certain he wasn't putting any unwanted pressure on him.

"Yeah. It felt… nice… Like *really* nice." Goku admitted. "I've actually wanted to do that for a while now..."

"Oh, *have* you now…?" A smirk found its way to Vegeta's lips upon hearing that. He gazed down at him, auspiciously. "So is *that* why you haven't been able to keep your eyes off of me? Because you wanted to *kiss* me?"

"Oh, mn, maybe… It's just… Your face. You're uh…" Goku sheeplishy fumbled over his words. "really pretty."

"*Pretty* ?" Vegeta repeated in amusement, laughing a bit. "Wow, I haven't been called *that* one before, not even by *Bulma* ."

He knew some of his features could be considered handsome and cute by *some* , but *never ' pretty'* .

"Sorry." Goku looked away, his ears hot. "Am I missing something? I feel like I'm being mocked… All I did was try to compliment you…"

Vegeta's heart pounded in his chest. *Is he actually* ***sulking*** *?*

"Don't worry, I'm not bothered by it." He smirked.

"You're not?" Goku met his gaze once more with uncertainty.

"No." Vegeta replied. "It just took me by surprise, is all. If anything, I'd argue that my face seems more terrifying than *pretty,* don't you think…?"

"Not to *me* , it's not…" Goku disagreed, with a gentle loving gaze.

"Is that so? Well, thank you." Vegeta smirked.

"I *wanted* to tell you before all this, but I wasn't sure how you felt about me…" Goku nervously blushed at what Vegeta said. He held a hand at the side of his neck, no longer looking him in the eyes. "I thought there might be others you were interested in… or that you weren't… into guys."

"You're not the *only* one who happens to like other men, you know." Vegeta scoffed, trailing his fingers through Goku's thick bangs.

"I feel like… I'm being selfish right now…" Goku murmured, ashamedly.

"*Selfish*... ?" Vegeta repeated, worried. "How? In what way?"

"I just… I like kissing and all, but…" Goku gnawed at his lip. "You have *other* needs too, right...? Like *sexual* ones… I don't… think I can fulfill those right now… Not after…"

"What? Hey, look at me…" Vegeta caressed his face with both hands, getting him to look at him before he could turn away. "All I care about right now is what you're *comfortable* with." - a small blush - "Sex is *hardly* what matters to me…"

"It isn't? Usually people would *want* that sort of thing…" Goku was so used to sex being considered a priority so to hear otherwise was…

"Well…, of course I'd *like* to... I am *attracted* to you, after all, but it isn't… *required* for me to… *like or be with* somebody…" Vegeta explained. "I can survive without it."

"Are you sure you're not just saying that to make me feel better…?" Goku studied him, suspiciously.

"Not at all." Vegeta didn't even have to think about it. "My needs can wait until you're ready, *if* you're ever ready. I don't want you to think of this as something to rush for my sake."

"Still…" Goku still wasn't entirely convinced. He looked saddened. "Won't you get lonely if I can't… give you everything you want ...*?* "

"Believe me," Vegeta took his hand into his own when he saw that he was fidgeting and pecked his wrist. "I have everything I could ever want just *being* with you."

Goku intertwined their fingers, looking down a bit. "So you're… really not going to leave me over this…?"

Vegeta smiled softly at seeing how worked up the man was getting. Goku could be so thoughtful and caring sometimes. " *Gods* no. We'll *make* it work, I promise. So what do you say, Kakarot? Will you allow me to call you *mine*... ?"

"It depends, do you really think you can handle me…?" Goku had asked that question multiple times or made statements implying that he was too much for Vegeta. Vegeta was having none of that, not *anymore* .

"I*'ve* got a *better* question for you." Vegeta inched closer. "Do you think you can handle *me* ? I warn you, I'm not always easy to get along with."

"Well, I do like a good challenge." Goku smirked.

"Good. Because I like giving them. *Especially* to you." Vegeta moved in to kiss him once more, but Goku stopped him.

"Wait… Vegeta, before we do this, is there… anything else I should know…?"

Vegeta had to pause for a second. "About what…?"

"Like *boundaries* , or things you're not *comfortable* with." Goku clarified. "I don't want to… upset you one day without realizing it."

"You're asking *me* that?" Vegeta was a bit surprised to say the least. "Well… I do have one, I suppose…"

"What is it…?" Goku probed.

Vegeta breathed in, as if he needed to prepare himself first. "You may… have to deal with me refusing physical contact sometimes. When that happens, I want you to know that none of it is your fault. I just… don't always respond well to it."

"Alright…, but… why…?" Goku questioned with hesitation, not wanting to pry into his business too much, not even sure if he had a *right* to.

"Well… What's the reason *you're* afraid of intimacy…?" Vegeta countered, reluctant to reveal such a vulnerable part of his life to him.

Goku blinked for a second before his heart sunk in his chest as the realization hit him. "You mean… you were… raped…? By *who* ?"

He had no clue that Vegeta had been through something so horrible. He wasn't entirely sure what to say.

"It was a long time ago, it doesn't matter anymore..." Vegeta tried to dismiss the conversation.

"What? Of *course* it matters. Look at me…" Goku gently placed a hand on the side of Vegeta's face to keep him from turning away. "Vegeta, you can… talk to me..."

Hot liquid invaded Vegeta's vision as he started shaking. He closed his eyes and planted his lips to the palm of Goku's hand. "If you… don't mind… I'd rather not."

He then buried his face in Goku's chest, needing a moment to calm himself down.

"Alright. I understand… There's… a lot of things *I* don't like talking about either… Still… I'm sorry that happened to you." Goku said softly, running his fingers through Vegeta's hair.

Vegeta turned his head over so he could listen to Goku's heart, which was racing a mile a minute just like his own. "This is why… I don't ever want you to feel like you aren't good enough…, because you *are* , to *me* . And I *understand* it… The fear you must be feeling… I've been there

before, Hell, I'm *still* there… So… will you just… promise to give me space when I need it and I'll do the same for you…?"

"Okay…" Goku nodded.

"That's all I ask." Vegeta sat up, tenderly brushing his lips against Goku's. "Now get some rest already, Carrot cake."

"What did you call me…?" Goku briefly wondered if he had heard wrong.

"Carrot cake." Vegeta had no apology. "Your stupid mouth tasted like carrots..."

Goku's face turned bright red. "I… Still… Don't call me that…"

"Why? You don't have to be so embarrassed about it." Vegeta jeered, lying down next to him. He had long since moved his and Goku's beds side by side since Goku had kept asking to sleep in his bed practically every night anyways.

"I'm *not*... I just…" Goku mouthed, nearly losing his composure entirely. "I prefer you to call me Kakarot, is all..."

"But that's what I *always* call you. There's nothing wrong with having a nickname. Besides…" Vegeta's breath tickled Goku's ear. "Just between you and me, Carrot cake is actually my *favorite*... "

He didn't even think twice before stealing another kiss from him. It was only a passing moment, but enough to cause Goku's heart to skip a beat, his face and neck burning as Vegeta pulled back.

"Goodnight, Vegeta." Goku simpered.

"Goodnight, Kakarot." Vegeta returned the gesture, before spreading a blanket on top of them. He then took his hand into his own, lacing their fingers together. "Just remember… If you have any

nightmares, I want you to wake me up , do you understand? No knives or box cutters."

"I know..."

Goku looked down, avoiding his gaze somewhat. He then scooted over closer so he could lay against him.

Vegeta didn't mind. It seemed like Goku falling asleep in his arms had become their nightly routine at this point regardless if it was ever part of their initial plan or not so he was pretty much used to it at this point.

…

"Vegeta…"

Vegeta was awoken by Goku's panicked voice calling out his name.

"What's wrong…?" It didn't take much to realize the other Saiyan was crying.

"Vegeta, please…" Goku's voice cracked, his entire body trembling. "It's him again…"

"It's alright, Kakarot. I'm right here…" Vegeta tightly hugged him, planting kisses here and there. "You're safe now. He can't hurt you anymore."

"I want it to stop…" Goku had his arm wrapping around Vegeta's side, slightly digging his nails into Vegeta's back, but not enough to hurt him.

Vegeta brushed some hair out of his lover's face, wanting nothing more than to console him.

Goku's quivered, his breaths rapid and uneven.

Vegeta hugged him closer, kissing him on the top of his head. "Shh, it's okay. Just *breathe* for me... Can you do that? Good. That's it. You're doing wonderful. Everything is going to be alright. I've got you, Kakarot..."

Vegeta continued to whisper sweet reassurances into his ear until he could finally feel Goku starting to calm down.

"Feel better…?"

"Y-Yeah, I… I think so…"

"Then go back to sleep…, alright?" Vegeta placed a hand on the back of his head, kissing him softly on the forehead.

"Alright…" Goku closed his eyes, finally relaxed. A moment passed before he spoke again, barely above a whisper. "...I like it when you hold me like this… reminds me… of my grandpa..."

Goku slowly allowed himself to drift back off, leaving Vegeta to ponder what had just happened.

These nightmares are really getting out of hand. He's been having them nearly every single night over the past couple months.

A doctor might be able to prescribe him some sort of medication to help stop them, but I'm afraid that he'll just get upset if I bring it up again.

Still, we may not be left with much of a choice, especially if he keeps hurting himself. He came to me ***tonight*** *, sure, but that could change,* ***easily*** *. As things stand, he's completely unpredictable right now.*

*There's got to be something more I can **do** for him.* Just *because **I** had to suffer through those things alone doesn't mean **he** should have to **as well**...*

…

A/N: So that took forever and was very hard to write, but I hope somebody enjoyed it.

Moving Forward (Part 1)

Story: Even The Strongest, Chapter 6

Disclaimer: I don't own Dragon Ball.

FML, this took, what, three months to update??? I'm so sorry y'all. I wanted to finish the entire trial process for this and rewrote this chapter about 3 times so that's why it took so long ahhhhh.

As always, I find myself perpetually UNHAPPY with how this chapter turned out, and hate it horribly, but will post anyways despite how apprehensive I feel.

ALSO THIS CHAPTER WAS TOO LONG FOR Ao3 or Fanfiction.net to handle so I'm going to have to break it up into parts.

BTW, Vegeta, Whis and Beerus are so hard for me to write for some reason, exploring a softer side to them as I have in this chapter. In general, I had a shit ton of trouble with this, I just want to scream right now.

TRIGGER WARNINGS:

Self-harm, Disordered Eating, Homophobic Slur, non graphic sexual assault scene, talk of rape, talk of suicide, people being assholes, some victim blaming, do I have to mention this is dark. A lot of it's written from personal experiences so uh, anyways, just proceed with caution.

...

It wasn't uncommon for Goku and Vegeta to rip each other's clothes when they were sparring, such things were inevitable due to how rough of fighters they were. As such, hiding things like injuries from the other for too long wasn't always possible because of the off chance that it would be discovered.

Vegeta knew he shouldn't have been surprised, he *shouldn't* have. But all this time he had been hoping it wasn't true, trying over and over again to push the thought to the back of his mind.

So to say that he felt like he had been stabbed in the chest with a knife when he first saw the lacerations on Goku's leg would be putting it lightly. And much to his dismay it *wasn't* just cuts either. There were *scars* too, ones that had to be at least a month to two months old, and even newer ones. The very sight of it tore him apart because it *confirmed* the suspicions he had had; That Goku had in fact been hiding things from him.

"Kakarot… Your leg… It's…" He had accidentally widened an already existing hole in Goku's zubon while they were scuffling on the ground, and that's when he saw them on his inner thigh.

"That's uh… I'm sorry… I got upset again and…" Goku stammered, immediately looking away. A common statement, really. But how *else* could he explain himself?

Vegeta wanted to say something, but no words would come out. Swallowing a lump that had formed in his throat, he traced his thumb along one of the cuts that had reopened, staining the fabric of his glove with the other man's blood. One of the cuts had reopened.

He had seen Goku's blood multiple times before, but there was always something different, something that, even now, he couldn't fully stomach about it when he knew it was from a wound that the Saiyan himself had created on purpose, not for training reasons but simply to cope with his trauma.

Goku's face turned slightly red as Vegeta's fingers brushed against his inner thigh. The sensation of being touched there made his skin crawl.

He felt vulnerable.

He didn't like it.

Not because it was Vegeta, but because ***that man*** had touched him there.

"Well, this is… unexpected." Whis interrupted both of their thoughts. He bent down next to Vegeta to get a closer look at Goku's wounds, the ones that Vegeta had been so intently focused on.

"Whis!" Vegeta jumped slightly, startled.

Goku remained glued to his spot, looking at both of them nervously.

"...Goku, have you been hurting yourself?" Whis's tone was calm, but the question was blunt and to the point. It was hard to tell, but he almost looked unnerved.

Realizing his mentor had figured out what the wounds were from immediately, the Saiyan allowed his bangs to shadow his eyes, too ashamed to formulate a response.

Vegeta averted his gaze. "Yeah... He's been… doing this for at least a few months now…"

Goku couldn't help but feel a sting of betrayal when Vegeta said that, but he knew there was no use hiding it anymore.

"I see…" Whis replied. "I did notice he's been scratching himself rather frequently lately, but I hadn't realized it had gotten this out of hand."

As he said that, he pressed his thumb against the skin next to one of Goku's cuts, moving his leg outward slightly. Goku turned his head away, once again blushing awkwardly at the contact. He knew there was no ill intent behind it, but he really didn't want to be touched there anymore. These injuries had already attracted enough attention from Vegeta.

"Some of these appear to be quite deep too…" Whis noted, before retracting his hand, maybe because he had picked up on Goku's discomfort. "Did something happen to cause you to do this?"

"It's…" Goku couldn't say it.

"...Kakarot, would you mind if I told him…?" Vegeta asked after a moment. "He may be able to help you, or at least give you some kind of suggestion…"

Vegeta didn't want to betray Goku's trust in him, but this matter had reached a point that he honestly didn't know what else to do. Any advice could help.

"...Okay…." Goku murmured.

After a long time, Vegeta answered Whis's question. "...A few months ago, some bastard… raped him… He's… having trouble dealing with it."

…

"Ah, so that's what it is…" Whis mused after Vegeta had explained the whole story. There was no judgment, it was only a simple statement of observation. "Yes, that would certainly explain his aversion to physical contact. It's been limiting his movements when he spars… Hm… Although I can't stop him if this is how he's has chosen to deal with all of this, I do think it would be wise for him to find other methods to channel out his feelings, preferably ones that don't involve harming himself."

Vegeta opened his mouth to respond but Goku cut him off, "I've *tried* , Whis, I swear I have, but nothing else is working anymore…"

"...So you say. But tell me. What about this do you think helps you?" Whis asked.

"It's… a whole lotta stuff… I'm not really sure how to answer that…" Goku pulled his knees up to his chest. He thought he had had an answer before, but it turned out that was only *part* of it.

"I need you to at least try, Goku…" Whis almost seemed impassive yet gentle at the same time.

"...I guess it… distracts me somehow." he finally admitted, relaxing a bit. "That way ... I don't have to *see* ***him*** anymore ... I mean… even if I don't… always understand the stuff goin' on inside my head… I don't *need* to… cuz the pain… it's… something that I *do* understand... and it… takes me away from that…"

He was sure in that moment that he was going to be judged or looked down on. In hindsight, his explanation sounded so stupid to him.

Whis said nothing of the sort however, urging him to go further. "Takes you away from what exactly?"

"...Like the memories… and the nightmares… and also…" the last part of Goku's answer was extremely vague.

"Also…?" Whis inquired.

"...It's just… Nothing feels *right* anymore... My body… and everything else… It's not… how I *want* it to be ... So… even if I can't… *change* anything…, at least I have… some sorta control… over the physical pain… *God* , this probably sounds so stupid…" Goku covered his face with his hand, pulling at his bangs in frustration as he rested his elbows against his legs.

"Well, I wouldn't say it's stupid… On some level, I suppose it even makes sense somehow…" Whis assured him. "This 'control' you speak of… It's your way of reclaiming ownership over your mind and body; ownership which you feel was stolen from you when he violated you, isn't it…?"

"...Yeah…" Goku gnawed at the inside of his cheek. "I didn't know how else to put it into words..."

"Well, from what you've described, it sounds like some form of dissociation to me… Perhaps you could try holding ice?" Whis suggested.

"Ice…?" Goku inquired with some uncertainty.

"Mhm." Whis confirmed, leaning in towards him with a smile. "Believe it or not, it can actually be quite painful… How about this? The next time you feel like hurting yourself, I want you to go to the kitchen. There's a bunch of ice in the freezer, so feel free to take as much as you'd like."

Goku was quiet for a second, before looking down with a troubled expression. "I dunno… You really think it could work?"

"If it doesn't, there *are* always other options as well, such as *harichiryou, or acupuncture.* I hear it's actually super popular back on earth." Whis said. It was clearly meant as a joke, though Goku didn't pick up on that fact.

"Ha..ri." Goku tested the first part of the word in his mouth, a look of distrust suddenly passed over his face. "No way, I hate needles!"

His cheeks puffed out, gaining some amusement from both Whis and Vegeta alike over that.

"Alright, alright... No needles for now. Jokes aside, I think it would be best if we put the rest of your match with Vegeta on hold for now. I can already tell that you two aren't going to be in the right state of mind until this matter is settled. I imagine Vegeta also has a lot that he wants to say to you as well. As for your wounds, however…" With a wave of his staff, Whis healed the two Saiyans, their wounds gone in an instant. Only Goku's older scars remained. "There. All healed."

Goku couldn't help but feel shame when he heard Whis's decision to postpone their match. He covered his face with his hands, pulling at his hair.

"...I'm… sorry… I'm sure you must be disappointed in me right now… about what happened… between me and… ***that man*** …" He trailed off with some bitterness which was directed at himself.

"...Wait, what? You think I'm *disappointed* in you over that? Nonsense… Why *would* I be…?" Whis asked, a bit confused.

"It's just… I can't believe I was stupid enough to trust him. I took *pills* from a *stranger* . What *sane* person *does* that? He could have *killed* me and I didn't even…" Goku trailed off.

"Well, it may be true that you could have used better judgment about some things," Whis didn't deny it. "but, regardless, that man is responsible for his own actions, Goku. After all, did he not explicitly ignore you when you asked him to stop? That was *his* choice. You share no part in that."

Goku wanted to take some encouragement from his words, but it was nearly impossible when the doubts had already started plaguing his mind.

Whis was quiet for a moment before glancing back towards Vegeta, who had reached a hand up to touch his partner's shoulder.

"In any case, I have a few errands I must attend to. I'll leave you two alone for now." Whis said simply, before glancing at Goku one last time. "But Goku…?"

"Huh?" Goku gazed up at him.

"...No matter what you may seem to think, your body *is still yours*. What that man did to you hasn't changed that… And I'm pretty sure your dear Vegeta feels the same way." The angel smiled softly, giving the implication that he already knew about their relationship, which they hadn't bothered to announce to anyone yet.

Neither Saiyan cared to address it, however, as Vegeta was more focused on Goku's well-being and Goku was more focused on the other stuff Whis had said, not even knowing how to respond to all that.

But Whis was right. Vegeta *did* feel that way. He had made that abundantly clear to Goku on multiple occasions, so why did Goku constantly feel otherwise, like he was unclean?

Because, in *Goku's* eyes, he ***was***.

Unworthy.

Of everything that Vegeta had offered him.

But that couldn't be further from the actual truth of the matter. Vegeta *loved* him, so much more than he could express with words alone. There was absolutely nothing that could push him away from him, least of all his body or what it had been through. Or what ***he*** had been through.

Vegeta wished Goku could understand that, but, unfortunately, he knew why he couldn't, and it tore him apart.

"Hey… I want you to go back to the bedroom…" He instructed, caressing Goku's cheek. "We'll talk there…"

"Okay." Goku said, his hair falling in his eyes as he got up and did as told.

It wasn't long before Vegeta got up and started to leave as well.

"You know… The injuries on Goku's leg just now weren't exactly shallow. " Whis spoke up, stopping him in his tracks. You might want to keep a closer eye on him."

Vegeta immediately turned his head away at hearing that, his eyebrows contorting with frustration. "...Yeah, I know… I'm starting to realize that…"

…

A few minutes later, Vegeta found Goku hidden inside of a blanket on his bed. Except he wasn't lying down, no, he was sitting up.

"Pretending you're a ghost, now…?" The prince asked with some amusement, getting on the bed with him.

"No…" Goku denied. "It's just… easier to concentrate this way."

"You look ridiculous…" Vegeta scoffed, but didn't linger on it, assuming it to be some sort of comfort mechanism for him. "Mind if I join you…?"

"Oh, uh-" Goku cut himself off when the blanket was lifted and he was greeted with the face of his lover. He turned red as their noses were only inches apart. "Alright…"

Vegeta pulled the blanket over them both so only they could see each other now. It was a bit cramped but neither of them particularly minded it.

"How are you feeling…?" Vegeta asked after a long silence. "I know Whis healed you and all, but still…"

"I'm alright… I've just been thinkin' about some stuff, is all…" Goku said with some hesitance.

" *You* , *thinking*... ? That can never be a good thing." Vegeta tried to pass off his concern as a joke, a frown forming on his face when he received no response. He urged him closer. "Come here, I want to know what's going on in that head of yours…"

After a moment, Goku crawled on top of him. For some reason or another, his assumption was that Vegeta wanted him to sit on his lap. That wasn't exactly what Vegeta had in mind, of course, but he wasn't complaining, as long as he could hold him.

"It's… just some dumb memories… and… the nightmares…" Goku had his hands resting on Vegeta's shoulders, but was avoiding his gaze. "They keep getting worse…"

"Worse how…?" Vegeta inquired.

Once again, Goku didn't respond.

"Hey, look at me… Did you do that last night?" Vegeta caressed his cheek in an attempt to get him to face him.

Goku knew somehow even without it being said that Vegeta was referring to the recent cuts on his leg that had just been healed by Whis.

"...Yeah… It happened when I was in the bath…" Goku said. "I started remembering stuff again…"

"Do you want to tell me about it…?" Vegeta asked.

"...He… hit me… in the face… with his… *thing* … multiple times… And called me a bunch of names… I'm not… really sure what all of it meant… but…" Vegeta could tell it was related to

Goku's trauma, but his vocabulary had been fluctuating a lot recently when he was referencing sexual stuff, as he'd often go from having no filter at all one day to not being able to use *any* sexual language the next.

This was one of those latter times, but truthfully, some part of Vegeta actually preferred it this way, because the Goku he knew wasn't the type of person who would have spouted out stuff like *whore, slut, dick,* or *cock* so flippantly. Goku was immature in many ways, yes, and he certainly wasn't the most *modest* in his language, but he also wasn't particularly vulgar; Likely one of the many other reasons that Allan's behavior had made him so uncomfortable. It might have been acceptable if it was a willing participant who was actually *into* that. But Goku clearly wasn't.

"It was… humiliating… I felt like… an *animal* . Like I wasn't… a person to him… Like I was…" Goku's voice cracked, he didn't even know how to word it.

"A slave...?" Vegeta knew that feeling all too well. It was the only way to describe it when you had your individuality stolen from you; to be somebody else's plaything, and made to do whatever *they* told you to no matter *how* humiliating it was. When you were told that your entire purpose in life was to satisfy another; that your body wasn't your own, but somebody else's to do as they pleased to.

Goku clutched tighter at Vegeta's shoulders as he bowed his head, offering the smallest of nods. He didn't know if that's the way such a thing could be described, others had probably had it far worse than he did. It was only four hours, but a mere four hours that had somehow managed to break him for months.

"I'm sorry… You didn't deserve to be treated that way… by *anybody* …" Vegeta wasn't sure what else to say that he hadn't already. "...And if I could go back and take it all away somehow, I *would* …"

"...Hey, Vegeta…?"

Vegeta looked up at him. "Hm?"

"...Do people… actually do those sorts of things…?" Goku wanted to know. "In normal sex, I mean. Chichi never did. I know she wasn't a guy and all, but still… She was always… gentle with me… and said nice stuff about me… I wasn't… good at it, but I always… tried to do the same with her so she… wouldn't feel bad either…"

"Well… Every… relationship is different…" Vegeta tried to find the best way to explain it. "Some people are… *into* that ... , but… not everybody is ... and that's alright… It's just a matter of trust… and finding what you're comfortable with… But what he did to you… It wasn't consensual either way, so… I can understand… why it scared you so much."

"...If we… ever have sex… Will you… promise…" Goku faltered, almost afraid to continue. "not to do those things to me…?"

At this point, he still wasn't ready for that, and he didn't know if he'd *ever* be, but he had to ask anyway. To *know for sure,* and hear it from Vegeta himself.

"I promise, Kakarot…" Vegeta assured him. "I would never do anything that made you feel unsafe with me… You know that…, right?"

"Yeah…" Goku's response was barely above a whisper. Without any warning, he broke down in tears, his shoulders trembling. He tried to wipe the tears from his eyes but failed to stop them. "I'm sorry… I don't… know why I'm crying…"

"You've been traumatized, that's why…" Vegeta didn't even hesitate to wipe them away. "It's okay…"

Softly, he continued to caress Goku's face, brushing some of the hair out of his eyes. His gaze was filled with so much worry, but so much love at the same time. He wanted to express that concern somehow, to convey the intensity of what he was feeling.

Words alone *couldn't* , so he chose to show it in the only way he knew how to at the moment. Slowly - ever so slowly - he leaned upwards, capturing Goku's lips with his own. The kiss was soft, but it was enough to let the other Saiyan know just how much he meant to him.

Goku closed his eyes, feeling his face heat up at the contact. He soon pulled away, bashfully lowering his head in response.

Vegeta took in the sight with fondness. Before all this, He had never realized just how shy Goku could actually be. But he adored it, seeing the other Saiyan's cheeks burn bright red because of him. He wanted to pull that side out of him more often.

Much to his heartbreak, however, Goku started crying even harder after that, burying his head against Vegeta's chest.

"Kakarot…" Vegeta breathed painfully. He wrapped his arms around him, desperately wanting more than anything to alleviate his pain, but not having a clue what to do.

In that moment, Goku felt so small in his embrace, and fragile, like a single wrong touch could break him.

"...Sometimes… I feel like… you'd be better off without me…" Goku choked out amidst stifled sobs.

"What…? Hey, don't say that… I would *not.* " Vegeta tightened his hold on him slightly, rubbing his back. He didn't know what he meant by ' *without him* ', but he didn't like the implications. He could only assume that Goku was referring to suicide again, the urges that had been eating away at him for so long now. He *had* to get his message across. "I told you, I've already lost you once before and I refuse to go through that again."

"It's just… No matter what I do anymore… It's like I'm still *there*... and I want it to **stop…** I want it to go away… all of it…" Goku clutched at the fabric of Vegeta's uniform so tight that his knuckles turned white from the pressure.

"I know…" Vegeta's eyebrows contorted.

"I want to die..." The words struck Vegeta like a knife.

"I'm sorry…" His voice was strained, as he was quickly losing faith in his abilities to console him. Ignoring the hair in his face, he kissed his lover's crown before resting his cheek against his head. "I really wish I could help you, but I'm not sure how…"

"It's alright…, you've already done enough for me as it *is* ..." Goku pulled back. "Just being with you… It makes me so happy, I couldn't *possibly* ask for anything else…"

"...You know I care about you… I don't always show it, but I *do* … so if… something happened to you, I…" Vegeta couldn't even finish his sentence.

"I'm not gonna kill myself…" Goku argued weakly, despite having said that he wanted to die just a few moments before. He was no longer crying but he was still sniffling.

"You keep saying that… but you could still end up doing so by accident…" Just barely, he was keeping himself from breaking down all together. "Don't you see that? You're putting yourself in danger every time you choose to pick up a blade to hurt yourself with…"

"I'm always… super careful about it, though. And I never… cut myself too deep." Goku said.

Upon hearing that, Vegeta was at a loss. What was he supposed to say anymore when some part of Goku didn't even *want* to stop?

*How is he even **rationalizing** this?*

"You deserve so much better than this…" He pulled back, gently grabbing Goku's arm. Slowly, taking note of the insecure expression on his lover's face, he began to run a thumb under the fabric of his arm bands, slipping them off of him one by one.

The skin was now exposed, revealing dozens of scars on his wrists.

Vegeta could feel Goku shiver under his touch as he traced a finger along the largest scar he saw. It was on his left arm, the place he cut the most.

The truth was Goku hated his scars. They were ugly to him, but something he had started to consider to be a necessity to survive.

A bashful flush formed on his face when Vegeta lifted his arm and pressed his lips against his wrist.

"I really do wish you'd rely on me more often… when you're feeling that way…" Vegeta didn't know how many times he had said that, but he didn't care. "Because it hurts me too… every time I see more of these scars on you… just knowing I wasn't there for you…"

"I don't want to bother you..." That wasn't the first time Goku had said *that* either. Even so, Vegeta was long since used to it by now.

"You're *not* , though… not by asking for *help* , you're not… I've told you…" He let go of Goku's wrist, wrapping an arm around his waist to pull him closer. He then brought his other hand up to Goku's cheek. "We're partners, you moron. We're *supposed* to face these things *together* …"

"I know, but... it's not like I can call for you every time I get stressed out about something… Besides…" Goku faltered. "I don't… like talking about that stuff, and the pain… it shuts my feelings up, so that way I don't *have* to…"

"But you know that's not healthy…" Vegeta said with concern over his sense of reasoning.

"I don't care…" Goku muttered. "It's easier this way…"

"That's what I used to think too…" Vegeta ruminated. "Not about self-harm, but something similar… I thought it would help me feel better… but… all it was doing was turning me into a person I didn't recognize anymore… and I didn't… want to live like that, or allow some… *habit* to control me, so I stopped. And one day… I hope you'll be able to as well…"

"I'm not… as strong as you are…" Goku looked away.

"You say that, but you're still alive, aren't you…?" Vegeta pointed out. "Even though you said you wanted to die…"

"Maybe, but that's only cuz of you…" Goku sheepishly ran a finger over Vegeta's shoulder. "You make me wanna keep fighting…"

Vegeta blushed slightly at hearing that, flattered.

"Well… I suppose I should take that as a compliment then, shouldn't I, Kakarot…? Apparently, I must be doing *something* right…" He smirked with an affectionate gaze. His smile, however, soon faded. "Still… I want you to try to explore other coping mechanisms. Like the ice that Whis suggested…"

"I don't think that'll work…" Goku said. "Nothing else has…"

"Well, that's not a very positive way of looking at it." Vegeta lightly scolded him. "You won't know if you like something unless you try it…"

"But I have been trying…" Goku argued weakly.

"You've tried a *few* ." Vegeta corrected him. "But you can't give up on *all* of them just because one option doesn't work the way you want it to… Do you get what I'm saying…?"

"Yeah… I guess so…" Goku said.

Vegeta could tell by his tone that he was only saying that to placate him, but decided pressing it wasn't a good idea.

"Good…" He kissed him gently. "Now… We should probably start heading down to the kitchen soon. Or we could walk this off a bit until it's closer to time to eat. What do you think?"

"...Actually… Why don't you go on down without me? I'm not really hungry right now…" Goku said.

"You're *not* ? But you're *always* hungry." Vegeta teased slightly, in a way to mask his concern. "Are you feeling sick or something…?"

"Yeah, sorta." Goku dismissed. "You mind… maybe saving me some? I might eat it later…"

"I see… I'll have Whis set you aside a dish." Vegeta offered. "How does that sound?"

"Mn." Goku uttered in response.

"Alright. In the meantime, I want you to try to get some rest." Vegeta instructed. "I can tell you're exhausted."

"Kay..." Goku got off of him, moving out from under the blanket they still had on top of them, laying down on his side.

Vegeta took some time to spread it over Goku, tucking him in.

Seeing as Goku had already closed his eyes to sleep, he leaned down and kissed him on the cheek. "I'll see you later, yeah?"

Goku uttered something akin to another okay, causing Vegeta to smile fondly as he once again moved some hair out of his face.

He must have tired himself out due to crying.

Vegeta stood up and started to leave, but faltered when he made his way to the door, remembering Whis's warning.

He ran a shaky hand through his hair, letting out a breath he didn't know he had been holding back. Taking one last look at the resting face of his lover, he tried his best to fight off the voice at the back of his head telling him to stay.

…

Whis was in the kitchen when Vegeta finally got around to heading there. Before then, he had wasted some time walking around the building to clear his head.

"Oh, Vegeta." The angel looked up when Vegeta sat down at the table. "Is Goku not with you?"

"No, he said he wasn't feeling well." Vegeta muttered.

"Is that so? How odd…" Whis mused. "He's never missed a meal *before*... "

"Yeah, well… If you can, just set some aside for him. He said he'd eat later when feels like it…" Vegeta replied.

"I see. I'm putting a container with his name on it in the fridge right now." Whis responded.

Vegeta chose not to comment.

After a few minutes, the angel came back with a couple large bowls, handing him one alongside a spoon. "Here, Vegeta."

It appeared to be some sort of stir fry with a large array of meat and vegetables. It smelled nice, but Vegeta wasn't in the mood to mention it.

Vegeta dipped his spoon into the food and started to take a bite.

"Mind your manners." Whis scolded him. "You forgot to say *thank you for the meal* ."

" *Tch* , fine… *Thank you for the meal* . There, are you happy now…?" Vegeta grumbled, finally beginning to eat.

Whis smiled, before sitting down next to him and doing the same.

Vegeta could only assume Beerus was sleeping again, the reason for his lack of appearance.

"...Are you going to tell Lord Beerus…?" He asked. "About… the stuff with Kakarot, I mean…?"

"Well, that is part of my job, yes." Whis said simply. "If Goku has been hurting himself in his home, I think he'd like to know that."

"I see..." Vegeta couldn't help but feel a bit of anxiety at that.

"...Just in case you're wondering, Lord Beerus isn't the type of person who would judge somebody over something like that, so I honestly doubt you or Goku needs to worry about what his reaction will be…"

"...He's… always worrying that people are going to think less of him if they find out… Especially me… It's like he needs my approval for everything, even over his own body…" His eyebrows contorted in frustration as he covered his face with his hand. "This trauma… It's *destroying* him… He wasn't… like that before…"

"Well, I don't think it's just the trauma… when it comes to you, that is…" Whis commented. "Goku has always valued your opinion with high regard, likely even higher than you realize yourself. When you're angry… or upset about something, he *does notice* it, even if he doesn't always know how to *respond* to it… It upsets him too, but Goku represses such things, it's how he's always dealt with stressful situations before now. I bet you never even realized that, did you?"

"...There are a *lot* of things I failed to realize before…" Vegeta admitted in a solemn tone. "I just can't believe it took some bastard violating him to make me see what was right in front of me…"

…

Dinner went by rather smoothly overall. Once Whis and Vegeta had had their fill, Whis left Vegeta in charge of washing the dishes, which he did so dutifully, before making his way back to the bedroom.

Goku was still laying down, but he had turned over towards Vegeta's side. Goku opened his eyes upon hearing him enter the room.

"You're still awake?" Vegeta noted, joining him in the bed.

"Yeah, funny story. I couldn't seem to fall asleep." Goku laughed a bit. "I…"

He blushed, trailing off into silence when Vegeta pulled him into his arms, brushing his lips against his forehead.

"Sorry, you don't mind me holding you right now, do you?" Vegeta asked.

"No," Goku said. "I'm okay with it…"

"You were… about to say something just now, right…? What was it?" Vegeta wanted to know.

"It's nothing." Goku smiled softy. "Don't worry about it…"

He didn't *seem* to be lying.

"...Kakarot…" Vegeta hesitated, shyly averting his gaze. "Do you… mind if I kiss your neck some…? I'll… stop if it makes you uncomfortable…"

His voice was filled with uncertainty. He then looked back into his eyes, searching for any sign of discomfort. Under normal circumstances, he'd have just gone for it, but, more than anything, he didn't want to risk potentially crossing over a line that his partner wasn't okay with.

"Alright…" Goku blushed in response.

Vegeta couldn't be happier when he agreed. He slowly leaned in, closing the gap between them. Their faces burned even brighter as they closed their eyes, eagerly allowing their tongues to collide as they deepened the osculation. Vegeta quickly started to become much more bold, making sure to explore every crevice in Goku's mouth before he finally pulled away, taking in the sight of Goku's reddened cheeks.

A strand of saliva then followed him while he passionately worked his way to the other man's jawline in a tender trail of kisses.

Vegeta's lips are so warm…

Goku's heart was racing a mile a minute, causing him to feel a little dizzy.

Careful not to scare him, Vegeta adjusted his position to where he was now sitting on top of him.

Hastily, he allowed his lips to make contact with Goku's neck, soon finding himself sucking at the skin, the sensation causing Goku to start giggling.

Vegeta's eyes widened, pausing for a moment. The corners of his lips curved upwards in realization. "Kakarot, are you *ticklish* ?"

"N-No…" Goku denied, bashfully.

"Oh, but I think you *are* …" Vegeta purred into his ear in amusement, more than ready to exploit such a weakness. "What *was* that just now…?"

"It was… um…" Goku trailed off, not able to finish the sentence.

"Hm…?" Vegeta once again nibbled at his skin, taking full satisfaction in hearing him laugh again.

"Okay, fine, I am a *little* , but I can't help it…" Goku pouted, looking away. "My neck is… really sensitive…"

"Well, it's certainly nothing to get embarrassed about…" Vegeta smirked. "Maybe I *like* hearing you laugh… Especially after all that crying you did earlier…"

"Veget- *Ah*... " Goku's breath hitched as Vegeta's teeth suddenly dug into his neck, harder than before. It wasn't enough to draw blood, but it was enough to leave his mark and say that he was *his* . Nobody else was allowed to touch him.

That being said, it *was* a bit hard to take seriously since Goku kept giggling, but his laughter was adorable as hell to Vegeta, so he couldn't complain too much.

Feeling heat rise to his cheeks, he chose not to tease him any further about it, content just listening to it.

After a short bit, Goku actually started to find it surprisingly relaxing, more so than he'd ever thought possible. What was better, Vegeta seemed to know how to do it just right, his tongue working miracles in the process.

He turned his head to the side to grant Vegeta better access to his neck, an offer which Vegeta readily took him up on.

"Someone's needy… You really like this that much?" Vegeta asked with some amusement, finding extra pleasure in the sound of the contented sighs escaping Goku's mouth, knowing they were all because of him.

"...Yeah, it feels… nice… Just… try not to bite me too hard, okay?" It was embarrassing talking about this out loud with him for some reason.

"Don't worry, I'll be gentle." Vegeta assured him, before taking that as permission to continue where he had left off, littering his neck with hickeys of various shapes and sizes as if his skin were a canvas.

Hesitantly, Goku started to brush his hands against Vegeta's sides, but, as if on instinct, Vegeta stopped him.

"I'm sorry, I'd… rather not be touched right now." He spoke, barely above a whisper, taking Goku's hands into his.

He *rarely* did.

But Goku was okay with that. As much as some part of him *wanted* to touch him, it was pretty clear that *this* was what Vegeta felt the most comfortable with right now, and, if that's what he needed to feel safe, then Goku didn't want to tread on that.

"A-Alright… I love you…" His voice was weak and insecure as Vegeta intertwined their fingers above his head. That was the first time he had told Vegeta that since they had gotten together. In fact, this was the first time either *one* of them had said that to the other.

Vegeta faltered, unsure how to respond to hearing such an intimate statement from him at first.

In that moment, just as it had many other times, his father's voice suddenly echoed in his head, reminding him all over again that he would have never approved of him having such a relationship with another man, because it went against nature - *went against his ascribed role as an heir to carry on the royal bloodline* - but, quite frankly, Vegeta didn't care. As far as he was concerned, he himself called the shots now, and what Vegeta wanted was to be with Kakarot, so he would. It was as simple as that.

Still, Vegeta had never been one who could say such words so easily. Even with Bulma, he had usually preferred to let his actions speak for him instead.

So that's what he did.

Leaning in, meeting his lips once more. Surely, a kiss would be enough to get the message across, right?

"...I've been thinking…" He said. "We should go somewhere…"

"Go somewhere? But why…?" Goku asked, misunderstanding what Vegeta was talking about. I think we're just fine where we are…"

Down deep, he had wanted more than anything to hear him say those words to *him* as well, but he couldn't tell him that. Doing so would be selfish of him.

"No, I meant like a *d-date* , you idiot..." Vegeta corrected him awkwardly, a blush forming on his face. Goku could be so oblivious sometimes. "Somewhere back on Earth."

"...Ohh… Uh…" Goku paused for a moment as the realization hit him. "Sure, I guess we could..."

"You guess…?" Vegeta noted, apprehensively. "Do you not want to?"

"No, sorry, that's not what I meant… I mean I'd *like* to… But…" It was so rare for Vegeta to willingly suggest *anything* like this. Goku wasn't even sure what to say. "Only if it's something you want to do… You and I both know this isn't exactly our sort of thing… "

Truthfully, he didn't want to be on earth right now, but if it was only a day, he didn't mind it so much, especially if it was with Vegeta.

"It's fine. I wouldn't… offer it if I wasn't interested." Vegeta gazed off to the side.

"Ya got something in mind, then…?" Goku asked. "I'm no good at planning stuff."

"...Well, there is… a fireworks festival coming up in a couple months. The one for new years. Why don't we go to that…?" It wasn't that Vegeta particularly cared about the traditions of Earth, most

Saiyans didn't really celebrate holidays - but he had to come up with *something* . Besides, festivals usually had good food, so there was that.

"Alright…" Goku paused, grinning tiredly. "I guess it's a date, then."

"Yeah. It's a date, Kakarot…" Vegeta smiled softly, pecking Goku's cheek.

Goku closed his eyes at the contact, exhaustion finally starting to kick in as he dozed off.

His armbands were still off, so Vegeta soon found his attention wandering back to the scars and blemishes that were covering Goku's wrists; marks he had tried so hard to ignore while he had been kissing him.

Those marks served as painful reminders of all the times he had failed to be there for him, or hadn't been there because Goku didn't trust him enough to come to him.

"I don't want to bother you…"

As he traced his thumb over some of the wounds, his shoulders began trembling.

*Why does he always **say** that?*

*Kakarot could never bother me over something like this… **Never**... I just wish he'd **realize** that…*

"I want to die."

Tears welling up in his eyes, he buried his head against Goku's chest, moving his hands back down to clutch at the fabric of his gi.

Under normal circumstances, Goku dying would mean retaining his body and going to the otherworld or King Kai's planet to train more, but Goku could always do that anyways, so Vegeta knew fully well by now that that wasn't what Goku had in mind this time.

And knowing that hurt more than he could express with words.

I'm trying my best to do everything I can for him.

Am I simply not good enough?

No, of course I'm not.

He needs medication, and a therapist, but he doesn't want that.

"Those wounds on Goku's legs just now weren't exactly shallow. You might want to keep a closer eye on him."

As Whis's words echoed through his head, he let out a sob.

He's not wrong… If I had been watching over him like I should have, then he wouldn't have been able to hurt himself. But what the hell am I supposed to ***do*** *? I can't be* ***with*** *him all the time…*

Damn it…

Vegeta had never dealt with a situation like this before so he wasn't always sure what to do. He highly doubted he was handling it the way many others would have, but he had to keep trying.

It's my responsibility to look after him. Kakarot is depending on me.

If something happens to him, I won't be able to forgive myself for not taking better care of him.

Vegeta painfully observed the sleeping expression of his lover, pressing his lips against his forehead before laying down next to him and taking off his gloves.

*I **have** to find a way to keep him safe.*

He *had* to. Even if it meant taking away all the sharp objects he owned…

…

The next morning, Vegeta did exactly what he had decided he would, not only looking through Goku's bag and taking out two knives he had found, but locating everything in their bathroom and bedroom from razors to knives, and even a hard plastic comb that had been snapped in half. He then ran his fingers under Goku's obi to check around for anything at all.

" *Fuck* ." He hissed when he suddenly felt a sharp pain on his index finger. Retracting his hand, he realized he was bleeding. "What the hell *was* that…?"

Holding the tip against the blue fabric of his clothes, he then used his other hand, more carefully this time, to fold back Goku's obi. That's when he discovered the culprit.

A razor blade?

Then this must be what he used to cut his leg with…

Letting out a shaky breath, he tried his best to calm his nerves, before flipping Goku over slightly to make sure there was nothing else that he was hiding in his obi. Fortunately, all that was left was his putty and one of his cubes. After that, he took some time to thoroughly feel around the outside of his gi, not wanting to reach his hands inside of Goku's clothing without his knowledge or consent.

Gathering everything he had found in his hands, he brought it all to Whis, asking him to put the stuff somewhere that Goku wouldn't be able to get ahold of it.

Instead of bringing the stuff elsewhere, however, Whis opted to simply provide Vegeta with a key and metal box that had a padlock on it.

*"Here, you should be able to fit everything in this. Keep it locked when you're not around, so that way only **you** can access the stuff inside, otherwise Goku will need the key to get into it."* The angel had explained.

Even though Vegeta didn't know how much good it would do, he thanked him anyway. If there was the slightest chance it would deter Goku from hurting himself somehow, it was worth a shot.

Once he was done with everything, he left the box in the bathroom, knowing he would have to wake Goku up. He looked down at the sleeping Saiyan, who was now stretched out across the bed, one arm hanging over the side of the mattress and the other hand resting on his chest. The quilt was a mess and one of the pillows was lying on the ground.

A faint beam from the morning sun illuminated Goku's face, bouncing off his skin.

His mouth was wide open, drool draining down to the side of his cheek, but even the saliva wasn't enough to keep Vegeta from finding himself drawn to the sight.

How can somebody be so obnoxious yet enticing at the same time?

He may be an idiot, but I guess he's my idiot now…

"Kakarot, wake up. It's morning." He announced.

Goku didn't respond. No surprise there.

Funnily enough, Vegeta and Goku were polar opposites when it came to sleeping.

While Vegeta was a light sleeper, who would sometimes wake up at the smallest sound, Goku was a heavy sleeper who could sleep through nearly anything, although not to the level of Buu of course.

"Come on, don't make me repeat myself." Vegeta shook him by the shoulder.

After a second, Goku seemed to stir somewhat, but kept his eyes closed. "Five more minutes..."

"No. Not *five more minutes*. " Vegeta kneeled down in front of the bed so he was at eye level. "We both know you'll just go back to sleep if I leave you here."

"I will *not* …"

"As if you haven't countless times before?" Vegeta mocked. "Hurry up, I need to make up the bed, you've messed it all up."

"Hey, you can't just put all the blame on me. You were here too..." Goku groggily retorted.

"Maybe, but I don't toss and turn in my sleep like you do. Look, you even threw a pillow on the floor." Vegeta argued, as he picked it up.

A moment of silence passed by with no response and Vegeta could tell that Goku was starting to doze off again.

When Vegeta saw words alone weren't going to get through to him, he initially considered just kicking him off the bed, but that's when a devious idea suddenly crossed his mind.

Reaching out towards Goku's stomach, he grazed his fingers over the fabric of his shirt, tickling him.

"Vegeta!!" Goku burst out laughing, grabbing Vegeta's hand. "Stop that!"

"Are you going to get up now…?" Vegeta purred into Goku's ear as he continued.

Goku was apparently too stubborn to say yes, so Vegeta intensified his attack using both hands now. "I said… *are you going to get up now?* "

"Fine, you win, okay?! I'll get up! Just stop it already!" Goku had tears rolling down his cheeks from the intense laughter. He was trying to fight against it but was failing.

"That's what I thought." Vegeta scoffed as he drew his hands back and saw Goku finally crawl out of the bed. He immediately got to work on fixing things up.

Goku, of course, didn't look very happy. "I hate you…"

"You know you don't mean that." Vegeta wasn't fooled for one second.

"No, but you're still a jerk." Goku sulked.

"Stop whining." Vegeta scolded, straighting out the sheets. "It's your own fault for not getting up when I told you to."

"There are other ways to wake somebody up that don't include tickling them…" Goku retorted with a sour facial expression.

"Like what? Would you have rather me kicked you out of bed?" Vegeta tossed the fallen pillow on the bed, approaching him with a smirk. "Because I could certainly make arrangements for that in the future. I've done it before, after all."

"I don't understand you, Vegeta… Why are you so mean to me all the time…?" Goku groggily mumbled, when Vegeta hugged his waist.

"Oh, mean, am I…?" Vegeta raised an eyebrow, looking up at him. "And here *I* was just about to propose we go back to that restaurant you seemed to like so much at some point. But if I'm as awful as you say I am, then I guess I'll have to change my mind, *won't* I?"

"Wait, wait wait, I take everything back… I'm sorry." Goku apologized immediately. "I wanna go with you when you go! Please? Can I?"

"Hmph, alright, Kakarot… I'll forgive you." Vegeta said with a smirk. "But only on one condition."

"Condition…?" Goku inquired with uncertainty.

There was a hint of mischief in Vegeta's expression. "You have to give me a kiss first."

"A kiss…?" Goku blushed.

"You heard me." Vegeta said, looking at him with some expectancy. "What? Don't tell me you're getting shy *now* . We've kissed *before* ..."

Despite his words, however, there wasn't any pressure.

"I know, but… okay." Goku agreed after a moment, leaning down and kissing him. It was only for a few seconds, but it was better than nothing. He quickly pulled back trying to hide the flush on his face. "How's that? Was that alright…?"

He normally wouldn't have had such a hard time with it, but being put in the spotlight like that made it overly awkward for some reason.

"Almost… But I've got something better for you." Vegeta said, as he cupped Goku's chin. He didn't hesitate before recapturing Goku's lips.

"Now I want you to go take care of your business and make sure you brush your teeth." He instructed after the broke the kiss.

"Alright." Goku replied before heading to the bathroom.

Vegeta stayed close to the door, waiting for him to finish.

"Hey, Vegeta? Where's the razor at? I can't seem to find it." Goku peeked his head out of the door.

"What do you need it for?" Vegeta wanted to know.

"I… need to shave my arms." Goku said.

"Oh, let me in, I'll get it for you." Vegeta stepped inside of the room, grabbing the box and unlocking it with the key which he had put in his uniform, pulling out Goku's safety razor.

"I probably should have mentioned this before, but… from now on… all of the sharp objects are staying with me…" Vegeta said in a low voice. "Also… I found your razor blade earlier… Was that what you used to cut your leg with?"

"...Yeah… Sorry…" Goku lowered his head in shame.

"It's fine, but, from now on, if you need *anything* , you come to me and *ask* for it, you don't mess with this box. Are we clear on that?" Vegeta asked.

"Mhm…" Down deep, Goku understood why Vegeta was doing this. But it was still a bit upsetting that he didn't even trust him with simple tasks like shaving anymore.

"Good… Alright... I'm going to trust you to return this to me when you're done but I will *not* leave your side until this razor is back in my hand. Here…" Vegeta said with some sternness as he handed it to Goku. Upon receiving a small 'kay', he watched in silence as Goku shaved, making sure he didn't try anything. *'Safety razor'* or not, it could still be used to hurt himself if he wanted to.

"I'm done." Goku said after a few minutes.

Vegeta felt a wave of relief pass over him when Goku finally gave it back to him. He slipped it into the box and locked it back up.

"W-What are these?! Vegeta, you left marks all over me…!" Goku exclaimed as he stood in front of the mirror. He rubbed at his neck in embarrassment, wanting to cover them up.

"What, don't tell me you just now noticed them." Vegeta mocked with amusement.

"Well, yeah, *sort of* …" Goku admitted, flustered. "I hadn't checked the mirror before. People are gonna think you hurt me or something…"

"I highly *doubt* that." Vegeta said.

"But my neck is all bruised, what *else* would they think…?" Goku seemed a bit frantic.

Vegeta paused. "...Kakarot, don't you know what a hickey is?"

"A what…?" Goku asked.

"A *hickey* …" Vegeta was stunned, when Goku stared at him in confusion like he had never heard the word before. "No way…, you really *don't* know, *do* you…?"

"No, not *exactly* , anyway…" Goku said, awkwardly. "Could you maybe explain it to me?"

"...Well, a hickey is something that forms from an intense suction on your skin. Bulma, she often… liked to call them… love bites." Vegeta's ears heated up, his voice growing quieter with the last words.

*Why am I even having to **explain** something like this…?*

"...Love… bites…?" Goku was flustered as the words left his mouth. "But if that's true…, then won't Whis and Lord Beerus… know you've been kissin' on me…?"

Down deep, some part of Vegeta realized he may have gotten carried away, as hickeys were often perceived as the aftermath of something sexual, but he refused to make any apologies for it.

"So? Is that a bad thing? Maybe I *want* them to know." He smirked as he approached him, slowly reaching up and embracing him from behind.

"This…" He dug his teeth into Goku's neck just as he had the night before, causing the man's face to turn bright red. "is my way of laying claims on you. That way everybody will know that you belong to *me* now…"

He moved upwards, purring into his ear in a teasing manner, "Besides, you've been marked by royalty... You should be *honored.*. ."

More than *anything*, Goku *needed* to know that he was *wanted* right now, so telling him to *hide* his marks wasn't an option. Vegeta *wanted* them to know. He wanted to show Goku off to the entire universe just to say, "*Hands off. He's **mine***."

"Fine, but I wanna mark *you* as well…" Goku said, turning around and leaning down towards his neck.

"W-What? Now, just *hold on* !" Startled, Vegeta pushed him back, blushing furiously as he denied him access. "You *will* do no such thing. We have chores to do."

"Oh come on, that's not fair, Vegeta…" Goku pouted. "Why do you get to bite me, but I can't do the same to *you* ?"

"Because I said so, *that's* why, now get going." Vegeta replied simply, causing Goku's expression to turn even more sour than before.

"...Jerk." Goku wasn't happy at first, but reluctantly pranced off in response, his mood quickly shifting back to normal almost immediately after.

Vegeta followed after him, eventually taking the lead.

…

Goku and Vegeta soon found themselves surrounded by a pile of fish bowls.

Vegeta had to keep watching Goku out of the corner of his eye to make sure he was cleaning them well enough. It seemed that he could do decently enough if he actually tried, although there were a few that Vegeta himself had to go back over, because unlike Goku, who would be content going half way with stuff like this, Vegeta had a keen eye for remaining grime and wouldn't rest until it was perfect.

A fowl odor had filled the air, which Goku didn't hesitate to mention, as always.

"Man, it really stinks in here… I wish we had some air freshener…" He grumbled.

"Stop your complaining already. You should just be glad we don't have to do this sort of thing every day…" Vegeta muttered, as he finished scrubbing down the one that he was holding.

"Yeah, I know, but still… It's troublesome enough doing it as much as we do." Goku said. "I like being here and all but the chores are always such a hassle."

"You're such a baby…" Vegeta was long since used to hearing Goku complain, so he eventually tuned it out.

At some point, Whis peaked his head in through the door. "How's the fish bowls coming along, boys?"

"Oh, hey, Whis!" Goku looked up, smiling.

"We should be done shortly, we're almost-" Vegeta started to say. In that moment, however, he was cut off by the sound of shattering glass. He looked beside him to see that Goku had dropped one of the bowls by accident.

"Oh, crap, I shattered it…, I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to break it!" Goku stammered. "I-I swear it won't happen again…! So please… don't be mad at me, or make me go back to earth over this, I'm begging you…"

Vegeta glanced up at him upon hearing that. It wasn't the broken bowl that bothered him, it was the expression on Goku's face. He looked terrified.

Over a fish bowl? No, Whis isn't the type of person who would lose his temper over something like that when he could just as easily fix it…

This has to be something else…

So what could have Kakarot so afraid like this?

This was more than just an apology, it was along the lines of a mental breakdown.

"Goku, I'm not mad at you and nor am I making you back to Earth. I have the ability to repair stuff, remember?" Whis approached him, but Goku wasn't all there.

"Look, I'll even clean it up so that way you don't have to…" Goku trembled, as if he hadn't even heard him.

Vegeta's stomach dropped when he saw him reaching out for the glass shards.

"Hey, don't touch those." He instinctively grabbed his hand, panic causing his heart to pound in his chest like never before. "It's okay… Whis already said that he'd fix it, so just… try to *calm down* …

It's not the end of the world."

After a second, Goku's tears subsided as he watched Whis do his magic, reverting the fishbowl to its previous state.

"There. Good as new." Whis beamed, now holding it in his hand.

Unfortunately, Goku still seemed somewhat out of it.

"Now… mind telling me what that was about…? Kakarot…" Vegeta asked with concern, forcing him to face him.

Despite his efforts, however, Goku stubbornly continued refusing eye contact. Something was definitely off.

"It's… not important… I'm sorry, Whis… I… I really screwed up…" Goku said.

"You don't need to apologize. I'm fully aware that accidents happen. All that matters to me is that you do your job to the best of your ability." Whis then looked at the other Saiyan when he got no response. "I'll leave this matter to you, Vegeta. I trust you have it handled?"

"Yes." Vegeta affirmed.

Whis smiled before making his exit.

Vegeta let out a sigh, turning his attention back to Goku, who clearly wasn't in the mindset to do much of anything and needed a bit to regain his previous vigor.

"I'm going to put these back on the shelf. For now, I just want you to relax." He instructed, gathering several bowls in his arms, before floating up into the air and laying them out neatly across the top shelf.

He repeated the process multiple times until all the cleaned bowls were off the floor.

There were only five left now that needed to be scrubbed down, Goku had just started working on one of them. Vegeta sat down next to him to deal with the others.

After a bit, Goku finished his, putting the fishbowl beside them. "Hey, Vegeta? I need to go to the bathroom."

"...Well, whatever, just try not to take too long…" Vegeta told him, distracted.

"I won't…" was Goku's only response as he left the room.

Instead of going to the bathroom, however, he headed towards the kitchen, his head spinning. He was desperate to calm himself down; to breathe again.

He couldn't tell Vegeta the real reason that he got upset. That it had reminded him of all the times he had broken things; all the times he had been insulted and yelled at for it. He couldn't say that *that* was what he was afraid of.

He didn't even know how to explain it.

That 'mistakes' like that didn't *ever* fly with her.

He *had* to be better.

All of this over a stupid fishbowl…

Why is my chest hurting so much?

I gotta calm down.

Vegeta had taken away his blade and knives, so he couldn't use those anymore.

So his only other option was to find some elsewhere. When he finally reached his destination, he immediately shuffled through the drawers and found what he was looking for.

A knife. It had a sheath on it to not only protect the blade but more so because of how sharp it was.

Separating the knife from its cover, he crouched down on the floor, facing the drawers and held the blade up to his wrist, fully prepared to slice into his arm.

Or so he thought.

All of a sudden, a pang of guilt hit him.

No…

What's wrong with me…?

Vegeta trusted me to go to the bathroom.

If he finds out I lied to him, he's gonna be mad at me.

I can't do this…

Not now…

After a long moment of hesitation, he put the knife back in the sheath, and just held it there, taking in a deep breath.

"Goku?" Whis's voice spoke out from behind him, startling him.

Goku didn't even have a moment to properly formulate a response, so without thinking, he immediately shoved the knife into his boot and jumped up, turning towards him.

"O-oh, hey there, Whis." He stammered nervously. "What's up?

"I *should* be asking *you* that. I *thought* you were supposed to be doing chores." Whis's eyes narrowed slightly.

"Well, uh, you see… I was sorta taking a little break, but I promise I'm gonna go and finish them up right now, so I'll see you later, okay? Bye!" Goku nervously ran off before Whis could even reply.

When Goku was gone, Whis opened the drawer, which was slightly ajar, to discover the missing knife. "Ah. So that's why he was here… Perhaps I should have locked them up, after all..."

…

That day, Goku backed down in the middle of his sparring match with Vegeta.

It wasn't that he *wanted* to, but the physical contact was just too overwhelming for him. He was having trouble focusing.

A fairly common occurrence nowadays, not the backing out of a fight thing, but being reminded of his trauma in the midst of combat.

Even Whis had been able to tell that his fear of physical contact had been inhibiting his movements.

And the worst thing about it was that it was the littlest of things that set him off sometimes.

His hair being pulled.

His arms being grabbed.

His legs being touched, as well as other places like his chest and backside.

As they exchanged blows, Goku had tried his best to ignore the flashbacks running through his head, wanting more than anything to keep his focus on the physical pain brought forth by the punches that Vegeta had managed to land on him. And, for a while, it worked, it grounded him.

But all of that came to a crashing halt when Vegeta happened to brush a hand across the fabric resting over his tail scar. For whatever reason, the area was unusually sensitive today as it had been for a while now, so the contact had completely caught him off guard.

Vegeta was so distracted by the heat of the battle that he didn't realize the reason why Goku had left himself open for attack.

So he acted without hesitation, kicking his feet out from under him and knocking him off balance. Grabbing his wrist and neck, he slammed him into the ground from behind.

The sheer impact knocked the breath out of him, causing him to cough up blood.

"Come on, Kakarot. Don't tell me this is all you've got." Vegeta chastised him, keeping his hold on him and preventing him from getting back up. "I *know* you can do better than this."

Goku dug the fingernails of his free hand into the dirt, clenching his fist. "Look, I'm *trying* , okay…? But…"

He trailed off in frustration.

Vegeta was quiet for a moment, before letting go of him.

He then stood up, folding his arms authoritatively. "Get back on your feet."

"What?" Goku looked up at him.

"You heard me. I said *get up* ." Vegeta told him.

Goku slowly did as told, his bangs shadowing his eyes.

"Now. I want you to come at me again. And don't hold ***anything*** *back this time*." Vegeta said.

"...Wait, Vegeta…" Goku fidgeted with the fabric of his pants.

"What now?" Vegeta asked, when he saw that Goku was refusing eye contact again.

"It's just… Can we… stop this…?" Goku struggled to ask.

"You want to *quit* ? Why? What *for* ?" Taking a step towards him, Vegeta reached a hand up towards his face. "Kakarot-"

He cut himself off when Goku tensed up.

"It's nothing…" Goku turned his head away. "But would you mind not touching me right now…? Please…? You can spar with Whis or something."

"...Yeah, but…" Vegeta slowly began to realize it was trauma related and pulled his hand back. "Are you sure you're alright? If you need me to stay with you right now-"

"I'm fine," Goku assured him. "I just need a moment…"

Vegeta didn't like the way that sounded.

"...Then… I want you to go and rest by the tree over there… at least until you've calmed down some." Vegeta said.

"Can't I just go back to our bedroom instead…?" Goku asked.

"No." Vegeta knew fully well what that potentially meant and couldn't risk it. Even though he had gotten rid of the weapons in their room he couldn't take any risks. "I can't have you wandering off right now… We both know what happens when you get like this."

"I won't do anything, though, I swear." Goku said.

"...You've told me that before, remember…? And then I found cuts on your leg…" Vegeta argued.

"Yeah, but this time is different." Goku insisted. "I can just use one of my fidgets if I get upset, like you wanted me to."

"You said they didn't work for you…" Vegeta muttered.

"Well, sure, they don't work as much as I'd *like* them to, but they're better than nothing, right?" Goku tried to rationalize it. "Come on, please?"

Vegeta truly wanted to give him the benefit of the doubt, but something told him it wasn't a good idea. "And you don't… have any sharp objects on you?"

Vegeta disliked having to be in the position to ask such a thing, but he knew it was necessary to ensure his safety.

"No." Goku's response was weak.

"I see. Then-" Vegeta was about to open his mouth to let him go, but a voice caught his attention.

"No? How odd. I explicitly recall seeing you slip something into your boot earlier, Goku." Whis quipped, causing Goku to jolt. His eyes narrowed. "What was it again? Ah yes, that's right, I think it was a knife. You would do well not to lie to him."

Vegeta immediately turned an accusative gaze at Goku in disbelief. "A *knife* ? *Again* ? What the actual *hell,* Kakarot?!"

Goku edged back at his harsh tone, somehow feeling betrayed by Whis for ratting him out.

"Take off your shoes right now." Vegeta ordered, in a bit of a lower voice, but remaining stern.

"But it's not-"

"I said *now* ."

When Vegeta gave a command like that, it was impossible for Goku to disobey, so reluctantly he did as told, not saying a word.

Sure enough, Whis was right, Goku had a knife in his shoe.

A knife.

And one that Vegeta recognized all too well. He reached out and snatched it from him.

Multiple thoughts ran through his head at once, trying to process it. Goku had asked to use the bathroom earlier. He must have gone to the kitchen instead.

"Damn it, is *this* really what you *want* ?! I can't even take my eyes off of you for *two seconds* without you trying to find something else to hurt yourself with…! What's *worse* is that you *lied* to me about it!" Vegeta snapped, a pain-filled expression on his face.

"It's not *like* that, okay?" Goku finally retorted, startling him. "I didn't… even *do* anything with it… I mean, I was *going* to, but… I stopped myself because I knew it'd upset you again and I didn't want to do that… I just… never had a chance to put it back up… so…" Goku bowed his head in shame, causing a pang of guilt to rise inside of Vegeta's chest.

But for some reason or another, Vegeta was too prideful to simply apologize this time. Of *course* he was. So instead of dropping it like maybe he should have, he continued the argument.

"Oh, yeah, *sure*, that's *real convenient* for you to say *now*, *isn't* it? But tell me, why should I *believe* you when you keep turning around and doing the exact ***opposite*** of what I've ***told*** you to?! Does your life honestly have this *little* ***value*** to you?!" Vegeta shouted, exasperated.

"...I… Look, I'm... *sorry* , okay…?" Goku stepped back at realizing just how upset Vegeta was at him over this. His throat burned. "I already *know* I screwed up, like I *always* do, just please… don't yell at me…"

Vegeta's eyes widened slightly, feeling worse than ever.

"You really think you're bothering me by asking for help?! Goddamn it, you idiot, I wouldn't be here with you right now if I didn't want to be! Haven't you realized that by now? The only thing that's bothering me is the fact that you've been hurting yourself. And now you decide to use my box cutter?! Why do you keep doing this? Surely, you can't believe this shit is actually helping you! This isn't healthy! It's foolish!"

"I know that! I just… I'm sorry, okay? Please… don't be mad at me…"

Their conversation from months before flashed through his mind, making him realize he had repeated the same mistake ***again*** .

*God, I'm such an idiot. How could I even **say** that to him…?*

"Kakarot-" Vegeta started to reach out a hand towards Goku, who once again tensed up at the close proximity.

"That is quite *enough* , you two." The angel scolded, smacking the prince on the head with his staff.

Vegeta flinched, but down deep, he knew he probably deserved that.

"As I'm sure you're aware by now, fussing at him over this isn't going to make the situation any better, Vegeta." The angel said. "I think you owe Goku an apology."

Although Whis had a seemingly neutral stance on many things, he could be strict and stern when he wanted to be. He'd even scolded and corrected Beerus on occasion.

"...I'm… sorry… I shouldn't have said that…" Vegeta finally pushed back his pride enough to do as told. He wanted to say more, but the words wouldn't come out.

Whis then turned his gaze to the other Saiyan, whose expression had softened somewhat at hearing Vegeta's apology. "As for you, Goku… I'm going to be keeping all of the sharp objects under lock and key from now on. So if you need *anything* , then you are to ask either Vegeta, myself or Lord Beerus for it. Do you understand?"

His instructions were very similar to the ones Vegeta had given him this morning about the box, but there was no way of getting around this one.

Although it was hard to understand why Whis was putting his foot down over something like this despite having said previously that he wasn't going to get involved or try to stop him.

Was it because Beerus wouldn't have been too happy if he found out that Goku was potentially using *their knives* on *his planet* for such a thing?

Was it to protect the sanctity of their home?

Or maybe it was because on some level, Whis did care about Goku.

Who was to say?

They weren't about to ask. Especially not Vegeta, because, whatever the reason, this worked out in his favor.

"Mhm..." Goku knew he was in no place to argue.

Vegeta gave a shaky sigh before passing the knife to Whis, keeping his head turned away. "Here, take this… It's yours, right…?"

"Thank you." Whis took it, before looking over at Goku, who started to walk off. "Hold on a moment, Goku. May I ask where you're going?"

"...I'm gonna go and sit by the tree… like Vegeta told me to do, earlier…" Goku mumbled.

Vegeta briefly met his gaze as the other Saiyan walked off.

"Are you sure you don't want to go after him? He does seem pretty upset." Whis observed.

"I shouldn't. If I try to talk to him *now* , I'll just make everything worse. I need some time to calm down first…" In that moment, part of Vegeta had suddenly started to wonder if Goku's issues today were because of him.

Of course, something had upset him earlier as well, but even things as simple as being kissed and bit on the neck could be triggering or overwhelming for somebody with sexual trauma, so, as far as he knew, it could have been a mix of reasons why.

These doubts had been actively plaguing the back of his mind since the very moment he had asked Goku for permission to do it.

Did I go too far?

Or do something that scared him?

Maybe he was just too afraid to say that he wasn't comfortable because he didn't want to hurt my feelings…

*So is it possible that him grabbing a knife was partly **my** fault then?*

Could that also be… why he backed down during our sparring match earlier?

Because of the physical contact?

He has seemed a bit tense…

Damn it…

The questions consumed him.

"So I take it you're choosing to spar, after all?" Whis interrupted his thoughts.

Vegeta didn't hesitate to give his answer. "Yeah."

…

Goku slid down against the tree, watching from a distance as Vegeta sparred with Whis.

"I can't even take my eyes off of you for* two seconds *without you picking something up to hurt yourself with… What's worse is that you even* lied *to me about it! Does your life honestly have this* little *value to you?!"

He covered his face in his hands to calm his nerves, remembering how angry Vegeta was. Tears welled up in his eyes.

*How **can** it mean anything more?*

*Everything **about** me is wrong…*

If it wasn't, then none of that would have happened in the place.

*I wouldn't have been so **stupid** .*

Everybody says I play around too much…

That I drop my guard too easily…

That I'm too trusting.

They're all right about me.

*I **do** …*

*I've **always** been that way.*

Even against Raditz… Piccolo could tell he was lying, but I wanted to trust him.

*He was supposed to be my **brother** .*

My family.

Then he attacked me anyway, even though I was gonna let him go.

He said he'd leave another time too, right before Piccolo killed us.

Sometimes, I almost wonder if he was telling me the truth.

But he said I was stupid for believing him the first time, so why would the second time have been any different?

*He **was** lying, right?*

*Yeah, he **had** to be…*

Then again, how could I know?

I don't recognize those things…

That's why the same thing has happened with Frieza too… and not just once, but multiple times. All because I let my guard down around him.

Whis had once said that Goku and Vegeta would make a great team if they actually worked together, and maybe it was true in some ways.

Vegeta had had to come to his rescue and cover his ass so many times he'd lost count and so often because of the same mistakes that he somehow failed to learn from.

All I've been doing is holding him back…

And now Whis says he's going to lock up the knives because I can't control my emotions anymore…

Vegeta too…

Maybe he was right to get angry…

I know he's just worried about me…

But everything hurts… I just want this pain to go away…

I can't even do the things I enjoy anymore without being reminded of ***him*** *…*

I used to be ***stronger*** *than this…*

Able to ***handle*** *things better…*

So why ***can't*** *I just suck it up and move on?*

I feel like everything around me is falling to shit.

I already lost Chichi…

*But I don't want to lose **Vegeta** too…*

*I **can't** …*

Not because of something like this…

I need to apologize…

As that thought hit him, he suddenly felt some drops of water hit his head.

Goku paused for a moment.

Is it… raining?

It rarely ever rains here.

Although it wasn't too much of a surprise. Beerus's world *did* have an ecosystem. It had clouds and plants too. So obviously they needed water.

Over time, the rain began to pour down heavier and heavier until he was soaked.

Despite, that he didn't mind. He disliked thunder(he always had), but he found the sound of rain by itself to be calming. He pulled his legs against his chest, resting his forehead between his knees.

"Hey…" A familiar voice interrupted his thoughts.

Goku uncovered face to see that Vegeta had knelt down in front of him.

"How are you feeling…?" The prince asked, his expression softer than it was earlier. He too was soaked by the rain. "Any better…?"

"Some, I guess…" Goku could only imagine the reason why Vegeta wasn't sparring with Whis anymore was because of the weather.

"You sure…? You can be honest with me, you know… If you aren't, then just say so… I'm not going to judge you…" Vegeta said.

"... Honestly, I feel like crap right now." Goku finally admitted.

"Yeah, I figured as much… I went overboard earlier… I'm sorry…" Vegeta mumbled.

"It's okay…" Goku assured softly. "You were just… worried about me, right…? If anything, *I'm* the one who should be saying sorry right now… I went and grabbed a knife when I told you I was going to the bathroom… I lied to you… so I get why you're upset… "

"Regardless, the way I reacted earlier was wrong…" Vegeta said. "I should have been praising you…"

"Praising me? For what?" Goku tried to blink the liquid out of his eyes.

"You didn't hurt yourself… even though you had the opportunity to…" Vegeta glanced away. "I'm proud of you for that…"

"I thought you didn't believe me…"

"Well, I was lying... I said a *lot* of shit I shouldn't have…" Vegeta replied.

"So then…" Goku uttered, awkwardly. "You're not… still mad at me…?"

"No, not at all." Vegeta took Goku's hand into his own, kissing his fingers in a slightly flirtatious manner. "How could I *possibly* stay mad at *you*... , Kakarot…?"

Goku blushed at the gesture.

"I guess we both screwed up then, huh…?" He murmured, with a small smile.

"Yeah…" Vegeta said. "Still… I do… have one question, though, and I want you to be completely honest with me. That means no holding back for my sake." Vegeta said.

"What is it?" Goku met his gaze with hesitation.

"...It's about… last night… I didn't… make you uncomfortable, did I?" Vegeta wanted to know. "Even… something as simple as kissing, or physical contact… I know it can be hard sometimes, so I thought… maybe… I had scared you somehow… That that was why you… took Whis's knife… and why you were so tense earlier… You even… dropped out of our sparring match… You rarely do that unless..." Vegeta trailed off. He wouldn't be able to forgive himself if any of this was because of him.

"Hey, it's nothing like that… You haven't done anything wrong… It's just… there's something I need to tell you." Goku's voice became uneven, preparing himself for the risk of never being forgiven. "And I want you… to promise that you won't be disappointed in me…"

"Of course. You can tell me anything…" Vegeta insisted.

Goku swallowed, allowing his hair to fall in his face. His voice was barely audible and his shoulders were trembling. "I think… I need to stop fighting for a while… I don't *want* to, but… it seems like… when I'm… exchanging blows with people, with *you* , all I can think about is ***him*** , and I want it to *stop* …"

Vegeta was stunned for a moment by the confession, not even knowing what to ***think*** at first. Some part of him almost wanted to scream *no* .

And, in the past, he *might* have called him a *coward* for making such a seemingly rash decision, or said something along the lines of, *"So that's* it *? You're just going to* give up *?! Let this one man* destroy *you?! You can't be serious right now! Where is your* ***honor*** *? Your Saiyan* ***pride*** *?! You make me sick!"*

However, this *was* no rash decision. Because Goku ***loved*** fighting, more than *anything* else. But this had been building up and escalating for months, and as things stood now, Vegeta knew he was nobody to talk, because *he too* had stopped fighting once, after Goku died.

He had no place to interfere.

Besides, his feelings for Goku had nothing to do with him being a fighter. Just as he had fallen for Bulma, who was but a mere *scientist* . So to say that such a thing would not only be unfair to Goku, but also cruel.

No, if he truly cared about Goku as he claimed he did, then he *had* to accept this decision, as painful as it may be.

Leaning forward, he cupped Goku's chin and kissed him - so tenderly - if only to reassure him that everything would be okay.

"I understand…" Fingers running through his hair, he embraced him. "If that's really what you need right now… then I'll support you…"

All Goku could do in response was break down in tears, for what he was sure was the thousandth time over the past few months.

…

Goku still hadn't touched his meal from the night before. He couldn't. Even thinking about eating right now made him sick. But this wasn't the first time. He hadn't been able to comfortably stomach much of anything lately, partly because of the nightmares, but a mix of multiple reasons.

Although his appetite fluctuated a lot, he had always tried to eat before, but because of that, he would often find himself regretting it afterwards. It was like he was like he was losing control again, and he hated that, just like when Vegeta offered to take him back to the restaurant he liked so much.

That's why he chose not to go to the kitchen, because he knew how tempting the food would be.

His body was supposed to be the one thing in his life that he could do to what he wanted. Yet he had no control over his body when that man raped him; When he got erect against his will.

Even if Vegeta and Whis had taken away his knives, at least he could control what went into his body now.

Or so he thought. Vegeta had different plans apparently.

"Kakarot, wake up. I brought back some of the food that Whis made. I think you might like it." Vegeta found himself standing over a resting Goku, who had chosen to skip dinner yet again. His hands were full, between the cup of water he brought back and the container of meats and vegetables, so he used his foot to get Goku's attention, shaking his shoulder.

"Huh?" Goku turned over to look at him, still feeling tired.

Vegeta held them out for him to take. "Here. Sit up. I want you to eat this."

"I told you I'm not hungry." Goku murmured.

"I know, but you can't function on an empty stomach. It's only going to make you feel worse." Vegeta said.

Goku sat up, readily taking the water, but still wouldn't touch the food.

As he drank from the cup, his hand was trembling. If it was any worse off, Goku probably would have dropped it. Actually, he almost *did* , so Vegeta had to help brace his hand under it somewhat.

"Look at yourself. You're shaking." Vegeta scolded lightly, before pressing the food up to him. "Come on, I'd rather you not pass out on me because your blood sugar got too low…"

Saiyans had a larger appetite than humans because they metabolized food much faster. Therefore, that meant they also needed to take in more calories to not only maintain their weight and survive, but also to keep up their energy. This was especially prominent with Goku. He had had issues before with near about collapsing if he didn't eat anything by a certain point.

Because of this, Vegeta knew fully well that going without wasn't an option the other Saiyan could afford for long.

And yet, despite his tremors, Goku stubbornly refused the food. "It'll just make me sick."

"What- *Sick* ? *How* ? Like you'll throw up?" Vegeta pressed, slightly concerned.

"It's… not important. I'll eat later…" Goku gulped down the water, handing him back the cup. He forced a smile. "Here. Thanks…"

"Alright, fine… but I'm still expecting you to eat something tomorrow." Vegeta caved. "I'll be back in a few minutes."

Vegeta dismissed himself, returning the cup to the kitchen and washing it off.

When he returned, Goku had already laid back down to go to sleep. In the end, Vegeta crawled in the bed next to him and pulled him into his arms, deciding not to put any further pressure on him despite knowing fully well that Goku had no intentions of actually eating.

…

The next day, Goku's tremors got noticeably worse as another wave of hunger passed over him after they had finished clearing the lawn.

And it wasn't just his hands and arms this time, it was his legs too, but he tried to ignore it at first.

"Man, this stuff really causes you to work up a sweat, doesn't it?" He wiped his brow. "Then again, I did fieldwork like this a lot while I was with Chichi, so I'm kinda used to it by now. Oh, hey, didn't you say we were gonna be sweeping the trees next?"

"Yeah." Vegeta confirmed. "We should probably go ahead and start heading there now, but we need to get the brooms first."

"Alright." Goku said, before he and Vegeta flew off, then gathering what they needed.

As Vegeta focused on the task at hand, Goku continued chattering up a storm about anything and everything that popped into his head, mainly out of nerves from the otherwise silence between them. Vegeta never had been one for casual conversations.

""You know... It does seem kinda strange to sweep trees, dontcha think? Back on Earth, we'd never… hav'ta do something like this…" Upon reaching their destination, Goku suddenly felt light headed, almost losing his balance and falling backwards. "Woah…!"

"Hey, be careful." Vegeta scolded, wrapping an arm around him to catch him by his waist.

"Whoops, guess I kinda lost my balance for a moment there." Goku giggled, standing back upright. "Thanks for catching me, haha."

"Yeah, whatever… Idiot…" Vegeta scoffed, before letting go of him. "Here, take your broom."

Goku grabbed it and almost immediately got to work. Unfortunately, it wasn't long before another wave of light-headedness hit him.

Pausing, he clutched his head to fight off the stars invading his vision.

The lightheaded feeling quickly began to intensify, however, his sight starting to fade to black. Once again, he almost lost his footing, but managed to catch himself this time.

"Damn…" He knew his body was asking him to sit down, but he *couldn't* .

Come on, I have to keep going. There's only a few more tasks and then I can rest. I can't… disappoint him…

"Kakarot…? What's wrong?" He could hear Vegeta ask. But his voice was muffled along with the rest of his surroundings.

"'s nothing… I just… need a moment…" Goku slurred.

It was at this point that it got to be too much. His legs gave out and he collapsed, the broom falling out of his hand and on the ground beneath the tree.

"Kakarot…!" Vegeta's heart skipped a beat at the sight. He rushed over in a panic. "Are you okay…?! Hey, talk to me…!"

"Sorry… I got a lil dizzy… Not… feeling well…" Goku was barely responsive, but he *was* conscious.

"...Listen, I'm taking you back to bed. I don't know what's going on, but we're going to figure this out." Vegeta lifted him in his arms, rushing him to their bedroom and laying him down on bed.

Feeling how hot Goku was, Vegeta ran to the bathroom, taking some time to run a clean rag under cold water.

He came back and rubbed it around his face to wipe some of the sweat off of his face, neck and even his chest, a place he would have never touched otherwise without Goku's consent.

He said he was feeling dizzy.

Is it because he's not eaten anything…?

Shit…

Goku started to close his eyes, but Vegeta wouldn't let him. Not yet.

"Kakarot, hey, I need you to keep your eyes open, so I know you're still conscious." He was desperate to keep Goku's attention.

After a moment, Goku lulled his eyes back open, slowly. They were half lidded, but it was a better confirmation than none. "I'm… sorry, Vegeta… I really screwed up…"

"It's okay, I'm going to go and get you some food and water from the kitchen…" Vegeta said, folding the cold rag and placing it on Goku's forehead. "I'll be back in a few minutes…"

"Mn."

Vegeta couldn't tell by the sound what he meant, but he was more focused on retrieving the food.

He went to the kitchen, picked up a random pack of crackers and some sort of fruit that resembled an orange in many ways but was purple, bringing them back to the room with him alongside some water. Surely, they would be better than nothing.

Vegeta sat criss crossed on the bed next to him, making no hesitation to peel the fruit. He then ripped it in slices, putting one up to Goku's mouth. "Here, try this…"

Goku turned his face away, rejecting it.

"Kakarot, *please* … You don't have to eat a lot, but starving yourself like this is out of the question. Do it for me…?" Vegeta encouraged softly.

After a moment, Goku hesitantly complied, doing as told. His eyes lit up a bit as he swallowed the fruit, a cold sensation hitting his stomach when the juice of the fruit went down. The taste of it, whatever it was, was a perfect mix of sweet and sour.

Vegeta felt some relief as he watched Goku eat it. He smiled softly. "See? It tastes good, doesn't it?"

"Mhm…" Goku uttered.

"You want some more?" Vegeta offered with fondness at his expression.

A small nod.

Slice by slice, Goku finished it off.

Vegeta moved the peelings to the side. "I'm going to give you some crackers now. I want you to eat some of these as well…"

"Kay..."

After a moment, Vegeta continued to feed him until half the pack was gone, at which point Goku pulled away and adamantly refused, "Please, no more."

"Then you don't have to." He then gave him the cup he had. "Here… can you try to drink some of this? It's water."

Goku swallowed it all down, only then realizing just how thirsty he had been. "I feel sick…"

"It's probably because you haven't eaten properly the past couple days." Vegeta said.

"No, it's not that…" Goku argued. "It's just… everytime I do… it… makes me wanna throw up…"

"It-What ... ? Kakarot, how long… has this been going *on* for..?" Vegeta had to take a moment to process what he was even saying.

"A few weeks," Goku paused. "I think…"

"A few *weeks*... ? Why didn't you tell somebody…?" Vegeta asked, taking the cup from him.

It was a bit frustrating to know. Goku's way of taking action was letting his feelings bottle up then make rash decisions seemingly out of nowhere like this to "fix" the issue. Such as suddenly going without food for three days in a row to so it nearly caused him to faint.

"I didn't... think it was important to mention." Goku said.

"Of *course* it's important, you idiot. You're depriving your body of what it needs to *function* because of this. I would think at least *one* of us ought to know that." Vegeta insisted, reaching out and stopping him from turning his head away. "Hey, look at me, if it's… the food that's bothering you, then I'm sure Whis could help find you something else that would be easier for you to stomach… There's no reason you should have to go without."

"It's… not just the food, though…" Goku mumbled. "I... *always* feel bad for some reason."

"And why do you think you feel bad…?" Vegeta asked, patiently.

"I dunno… I start… thinking about… that stuff, when he made me…" Goku couldn't even say it. There were many other reasons as well, but he couldn't mention them.

"I understand…" Vegeta replied gently, as he ran some fingers through his hair, already having an idea of what he was referring to. "Still… I want you to try to hold it down, alright…? I'll talk to Whis later and see if he can come up with something. I'm throwing these peelings away."

Vegeta brought them to the bathroom, tossing them into the trash and washing his hands to get rid of the sticky feeling.

After Vegeta came back, he stayed with him, quietly playing with his hair until Goku's tremors had finally died down.

"It looks like you've stopped shaking, at least. That's a good thing." Vegeta commented, breaking the silence.

"Yeah…" Goku smiled softly. "I'm really sorry… I feel like I'm holding you back again…"

That was yet another time he had apologized over this.

"You're *not* holding me back… I came here for *you*... " Vegeta assured him, caressing his face. "Listen, I'm about to go and finish up the chores now… Will you be alright if I leave you here?"

"Yeah…" Goku repeated.

Vegeta's chest clenched. "If you need something, I want you to come to me… or call. You can use telepathy, yeah?"

"Mhm."

"I'll leave the rest of these crackers here for you, so you can eat them if you get hungry."

"Kay."

Leaning down, Vegeta pecked him on the cheek. "I'll see you later…"

Tired but hopeful eyes stared up at him. "Mn. I love you…"

…There were those words yet again. And yet *again* , Vegeta didn't know how to respond.

Goku said that far too easily.

Just as Bulma had.

He swallowed, cupping his chin and kissing him much like he had done so the day before. "I want you to get some rest. You're welcome to come join me if you start to feel any better."

"kay…" Goku said, secretly feeling a bit insecure at the fact that Vegeta still avoided saying that to him, a voice in the back of his mind telling him that he wasn't good enough.

He tried to ignore the stinging feeling in his throat, because Vegeta had been doing *everything* for him, and taking care of him, so, even if he wouldn't *say* the words, he proved it through his actions.

Or that's what the rational side of Goku's head said. But the voices at the back of his mind were anything *but* .

They told him a much different story; That Vegeta was starting to get tired of this - of *him* . That he was only pretending to be nice; *pretending to care about him* .

It told him that Vegeta would eventually find him to be too much to handle and leave him.

Goku didn't want that.

In that moment, he wanted to reach out and ask him to kiss him once more, to feel his arms around him for some kind of reassurance that Vegeta loved him as much as he loved Vegeta.

But no words would come out. Instead, Goku simply watched in silence as the other Saiyan left the room.

…

Vegeta made his way to the kitchen, washing the cup under the sink and returning it to the appropriate spot.

He then made fast work in finishing up the rest of the chores.

…

"Where's Goku? Is he still feeling unwell…?" Whis asked, when Vegeta finally approached him for training.

"Yeah... Actually, Kakarot won't be fighting again for a while. But enough about him. *He's* not the one you should be focused on right now." Vegeta pointed a thumb at his chest, deflecting the conversion. " *I* am…"

"Oh?" Whis raised an eyebrow with a small smirk, before dropping the subject. "Then you may come at me whenever you'd like, Vegeta..."

Vegeta drew in a breath, closing his eyes to gather his thoughts.

*If Kakarot can't fight right now, then that means I'll have to cover for the **both** of us…*

*More than anything, I need to focus on getting **stronger**, so I can **protect him**. My **family** as well.*

*They're all **counting** on me…*

*And I will **not** let them down…*

Finally preparing his fighting stance, he took a moment to look for any openings. Of course, there *weren't* any, because it was *Whis* he was up against. But he knew he had to start somewhere. So, in the end, he advanced towards him regardless.

...

…

Once Vegeta was done sparring with Whis, he finally decided to ask him about his concerns regarding Goku's appetite.

"A liquid diet?" Whis seemed a bit surprised as the subject was brought up.

"Yeah…" Vegeta said. "…He says he's been… having trouble keeping his food down."

"I see…" Whis pondered it. "Well, I might have *something* , yes. But it isn't really something I recommend by itself. Do you think he could handle some light soup?"

"Maybe…?" Vegeta mused. "I guess he could try that."

"Wonderful. I'll have something prepared for him tonight." Whis beamed.

"...Thanks." Vegeta replied.

For a moment, nobody said much until Whis broke the silence again. "Oh, speaking of which, I couldn't help but notice you left quite the bruises on him before. In the future, you might want to be less obvious."

Vegeta's eyes widened slightly, a blush covering his face when he realized the angel was referring to the hickeys on Goku's neck. He immediately looked away. "...Tch, whatever, Kakarot is *mine* , so I'll bite him wherever I please. The rest of the universe can go to hell for all I care."

"Oh my, how scary…" Whis held a hand up to his mouth with clear amusement. "Is that your way of marking your territory, then…?"

"Yeah, that's right..." Vegeta offered a smug smirk of his own. "So that means hands off."

…

"Here, take these. I had Whis make them for you." Vegeta later found himself in the same boat as the day before, bringing back dinner for Goku in hopes that he would eat.

"What are they?" Goku wanted to know.

"Vegetable soup and a fruit shake." Vegeta said.

"A shake…?" Goku inquired, eyeing him curiously.

"Yeah, and it's all natural too!" Vegeta grinned at hearing that his lover's interest had been piqued, crouching down in front of the bed so he and Goku were at eye level. He held it out for him. "You want it?"

Goku gave a small nod before sitting up. He was distrustful at first, but took a sip of the shake.

"How does it taste?" Vegeta asked after he swallowed.

"...It's… good." Goku admitted shyly.

"Yeah?" Vegeta's smile softened as he watched him slowly drink it all down. He held out the container of soup. "You think you can eat some of this too…?"

It was a small serving, but would be better than nothing, slightly more than the bare minimum.

"...I can try." Hesitantly, Goku took it from him. For a long moment, he stared at it with uncertainty, using the spoon to stir the vegetable bits around. Although it was mostly broth, he couldn't help but feel anxious about it because of the vegetable parts in it. But he knew Vegeta was expecting him to eat something solid, so, pushing aside his reservations, he finally took a bite of it. It tasted delicious, but there was no surprise there. Whis was an excellent cook.

Still, he couldn't fight off the feeling of guilt for eating. On one hand, he wanted to be upset because he felt like his control had been taken away, but, what he hated even more than losing control was the idea of Vegeta worrying about him, so he ate it all.

When he was done with everything, he wordlessly handed the cup and container back to Vegeta, who placed them on the dresser, before sitting down next to Goku on the bed.

"Come here." Vegeta invited Goku into his arms. After a moment, Goku scooted towards him, accepting it and resting his forehead against his chest.

"I'm so proud of you…" The prince whispered into his ear, affectionately petting the top of his head.

Goku's heart leapt at the praise, his ears becoming red, which didn't go unnoticed by Vegeta. "Hey… Can you… kiss me some more…? Like you did the other day?"

Vegeta paused, his own cheeks heating up in response. He gave a small devilish grin, brushing his lips against Goku's neck. "I'd love to…"

…

That night, when the food had settled, Goku was once again plagued with the familiar sense of shame for giving into his hunger, the familiar feeling of bile rising to his throat as his body screamed at him to get rid of it, reminding him of what had been shoved into his mouth by ***that man***.

It *was* more manageable than other times, but it was still frustrating.

Tears in his eyes, he sniffled, trying to tell himself to fight against it, to keep it down as Vegeta wanted him to.

Vegeta happened to be awake, so he heard it. He didn't know what Goku was crying about, but he wanted to comfort him. Pulling him closer, he planted a kiss against the back of his upper shoulder, hoping it would provide some sort of comfort. "Something wrong…?"

"No, it's nothing..." Desperate for Vegeta's warmth, Goku turned around so he was facing him, tightly hugging him back. With hesitation, he pressed his lips against Vegeta's neck, timidly creating a small suction on the skin.

Vegeta blushed at the contact, but upon feeling Goku's body trembling in his grasp, he chose to allow it. For whatever reason, he could tell that the other Saiyan needed this right now.

…

"Hey, Whis?"

"Oh, Goku, what is it?" Whis looked up with surprise as he saw Goku approaching him in the kitchen one day.

"I was… wondering if you could replace my wrist cuffs." Goku sheepishly lowered his head. "I want some that are black instead of blue…"

"Well, I suppose I don't mind, but… why are you asking?" Whis wanted to know.

"It's just… These ones stain too easily, and I don't like it." Goku explained.

"I see…" Whis mused. "Here… Will these work?"

After a moment, he conjured up some black armbands, giving them to him. They were slightly longer than Goku was used to, but he was happy all the same.

"Oh, wow, these are perfect! Thanks a ton, Whis!" he smiled, after pulling them on.

"It's no problem, Goku. I'm glad you like them. By the way, I'd like it if you could join us for dinner later." Whis said.

"A-Alright." Goku stammered unintentionally. "I guess I'll come back later, then…

"Before you go, there's something you should probably be aware of." Whis stopped him, right as he was about to leave.

"What is it?" Goku asked.

"I've informed Lord Beerus of your current situation." Whis said. "So he's aware of what's going on."

"O-oh…" Goku's heart skipped a beat as he heard that. "He's not… angry, is he…?"

"No, he's not angry, Goku... The truth is… Just between you and me…" Whis whispered into his ear. "He's actually quite worried about you."

"He is…?" Goku asked in a low voice.

"Uh-huh." Whis smiled. "But don't tell him I said that."

Goku's eyes widened slightly at hearing his words, but his expression softened.

"...U-um, Whis…?" He felt his face heat up at the sudden awkwardness of it. "I was... wondering if maybe… I could help you… cook something…?"

It seemed out of nowhere because Goku was just about to leave moments before but finding out Beerus would be speaking with him later scared him. Maybe helping to make dinner would make the impact of whatever Beerus wanted to say less severe. Plus, even more than that, the idea of Vegeta getting to enjoy something he had helped make excited him.

Whis's eyes widened, before the corners of his lips curved upwards. "Of course you can… I could use the extra hand in the kitchen. Come on."

…

Goku was good at following specific directions when instructed, so he had no problem doing everything Whis told him to. And a large portion of the ingredients they had were surprisingly ones Goku recognized from Earth, so it was easy for him to sort through what was what.

"You mind if I make some tonkatsu?" He asked after skimming through the stuff they had at their disposal.

"Sure, go right ahead. Just be careful not to start a fire like Vegeta did." Whis warned, stirring his pot.

"I won't-Wait, Vegeta started a ***fire*** ... !?" Goku burst out laughing, somehow able to picture it.

"Yes, it was shortly after the first time he came here." Whis didn't laugh but even he looked amused. "He got the bright idea to try to impress me so I would do more training drills with him, and I'm sure you can guess how that turned out."

Goku was barely able to breathe at this point.

…

"There. Everything is done now. It appears that I'll have to go and rouse Lord Beerus again." Whis said, once they had finished cooking. "In the mean time, you should probably go ahead and get Vegeta as well."

"Yeah, I'll do that." Using his Instant Transmission, Goku teleported himself to Vegeta, who he only realized a moment later was in the bathroom.

"Vegeta, I wanted to-Ah… Um…" Goku's face felt like it was on fire upon seeing that Vegeta was standing naked in the shower. When their eyes met, he quickly turned around, trying to hide his embarrassment. "Sorry, I'm just… gonna go stand outside…"

Vegeta let out a sigh, his ears blazing red as Goku left the room. "...You're such a moron… Can't you learn to use the door like a normal person ... ?"

"Oh, come on, Vegeta… I said I was sorry… I didn't know you were gonna be taking a shower…" Goku retorted sheepishly as he leaned against the wall.

It wasn't like he hadn't seen Vegeta naked *before* , so why was it so awkward *now* ? Was it because they were together now?

"Well, now I know how Bulma felt…" Vegeta muttered, somewhat irritated, as he turned off the water. He too was in a similar boat. He wasn't exactly shy, but because their relationship was intimate now, it did make him feel vulnerable for some reason and he didn't like that. It had been especially uncomfortable because of it being coupled with the fact that Goku was fully clothed at the same time. "Maybe you deserved to get hit in the head with a shampoo bottle, after all..."

"Don't be that way, I swear it was an accident… I didn't mean to." Goku really didn't want Vegeta to be upset with him over something like this if he could help it.

Vegeta let out a sign, before drying himself off and getting dressed.

When he left the room, he made no hesitation to send Goku a death glare, pointing a finger at his chest. "Accident, my *ass* . In the future, do *not* teleport to me unless it's an emergency or I *will* kill you. Are we clear?"

"You don't mean that…" Goku puffed his cheeks out, looking slightly distressed by the threat.

"...Oh, but I *do* …" Vegeta teased him, deviously. In the end. There was no way he could stay mad at that face. He cupped his chin, causing Goku to blush even harder at his swift change in his mood. "Now what do you want, huh…?"

"It's just… I was gonna tell you that dinner was ready, and… I sorta helped Whis with the meal this time. He even let me make some Tonkatsu, so I was really hoping you could try some…" Goku fidgeted shyly.

"Is that so? Well then…," Vegeta moved closer, kissing him. "I'm

looking forward to it."

Goku returned it, before pulling back after a moment.

"I'm still a bit nervous, though…" he admitted.

"About what?" Vegeta wanted to know.

"Well, apparently, Whis, he um… He told Lord Beerus… about everything… He says he's worried."

"I'd think that was good, though, all things considered, wouldn't you…?" Vegeta asked.

"Yeah, I know, it just… surprises me, is all… Cuz deities…, they aren't really… supposed to… you know…" Goku trailed off, not really sure how to put it.

Vegeta was thrown at a loop upon hearing Goku even imply such a thing.

"...Well, it may be true they aren't allowed to interfere with some things," Vegeta ran his hand up his chest to his neck, before looking him in the eye again. "but they do have *feelings* …"

And it wasn't just that. The truth was Beerus and Whis had made exceptions for them multiple times. Obviously, they had *some* leeway or Earth would have been destroyed by now and Trunks wouldn't have been sent to a timeline he'd have an actual future in. On some level, they did do what they wanted, even if they claimed it was just about the food.

Goku, on the other hand, wasn't sure what to think when hearing this.

Had his trust in people really been botched this badly?

"Maybe, but... You mind if we go the long way…?" Goku scratched his cheek, anxiously. "I kinda need some time to prepare myself first…"

"Fine by me… Do whatever you need to…" Vegeta assured him.

"Thanks, Vegeta…" Goku smiled.

Vegeta affectionately pinched his cheek. "Stop thanking me, already, clown..."

…

When Goku and Vegeta returned to the kitchen, Beerus was already there.

Goku kept his head bowed as he sat down in his chair, Vegeta soon taking a seat next to him.

An uncomfortable silence settled in the room now that everybody was present. Goku started rubbing at his upper arm on instinct, from an angle that Vegeta didn't catch sight of. This rubbing quickly turned into scratching.

After a long time, Whis suddenly broke the silence with a cough, which was clearly aimed at Beerus.

At that point, it seemed like Beerus was left with no choice but to speak.

"Goku, I know I'm a Destroyer God and all, but I would appreciate it if you stopped looking away from me. This is actually quite rude, don't you think?" Beerus had his elbow on the table and was resting his cheek in his hand. His eyes narrowed uncomfortably when he saw the blood forming on Goku's arm.

"A-Ah, sorry, Lord Beerus…" Goku said awkwardly. "I'm just… really nervous right now…"

"Nervous? Now what's there to be nervous about?" Beerus asked, as Whis placed a large bowl in front of him, which was filled with meat and a stir fry, alongside some of the Tonkatsu that Goku had made. Still, Beerus didn't touch it. Proof that he was more focused on Goku right now.

"I dunno… I'm just…" Goku paused. "afraid that you're mad at me because of this… or that you're… gonna send me back to Earth or something… I don't wanna be there right now…"

"I'm not angry at you, Goku… And if you go back to Earth, then that's your decision. I'm not going to force you to do *anything* . Whis *, stop him..."* Beerus hissed, unable to stomach watching him hurt himself any further.

"Yes, My Lord..." Whis placed a bowl and cup in front of Goku before grabbing the Saiyan's hand and prying his fingers away from his arm with ease.

Goku tried to continue, but the grip was too strong. No surprise there.

At the same time, this grip was a reminder of how weak he had been that day; of ***that man*** .

A lump formed in his throat, his hair falling in his face.

"Goku…" Whis spoke gently, keeping his hold on his hand as he sat down in the empty seat next to him. Upon sensing his discomfort, he loosened his grip ever so slightly. "I believe he asked you to look at him."

"Yeah, I know, it's just…" Goku's voice cracked.

"Please forgive him. He… sometimes has trouble with eye contact, especially when he's stressed out like this..." Vegeta explained hastily. "He's not doing it to be disrespectful."

"I see…" Whis pondered it, before glancing towards Beerus, "Lord Beerus?"

His expression seemed to lean more towards telling Beerus to let it go and be understanding of Goku's predicament.

Fortunately, he was.

"Yeah, it's fine, let him be, Whis." Beerus gave a small wave of his hand. "I wouldn't want to make him uncomfortable. That being said, I'd like to know why you've stopped fighting, Goku."

"...It's… cuz… when people touch me, I keep getting flashbacks… from… the things he did to me… And they've… been getting worse… The nightmares as well… So I thought… pulling away for a while… might help some…" Goku said. "You don't… think that makes me a coward, do you?"

"No, not at all," Beerus assured him. "I fully understand the need to get away from something that's triggering for you. Although I do think it would be rather unfortunate if a talented fighter such as yourself were to give up on what you enjoy all together because one man couldn't keep his hands to himself or respect your boundaries, so I really hope you'll consider coming back to it one day."

"Yeah, I want to, I just… need some time first…" Goku insisted.

"Well, as long as you haven't lost your fighting *spirit* , I suppose that's all that matters." Beerus shrugged, before smirking as he glanced at the Saiyan prince that was sitting next to Goku. "Besides, I still have *one* Saiyan I can always play around with in the meantime if I happen to get bored…"

Vegeta glanced off to the side, choosing not to comment. If feeding Beerus's boredom would protect Goku and their home, then so be it.

"Lord Beerus, would you mind passing me my staff? I'm going to heal his arm." Whis said.

"Yeah, sure. Here." Beerus reached beside him and grabbed it, before holding it across the table for Whis to take.

The wound was soon gone along with the blood.

"There. All healed." Whis beamed, before letting go of his hand.

"Thanks, Whis…" Goku said.

"It's no problem, Goku…" Whis assured him, before retrieving his own bowl of food and drink. In the end, he chose to stay in the seat next to Goku presumably in case Goku tried to scratch himself again.

Goku's food was different solely based on his choice, but nobody questioned it since they already knew.

"Now… Enough about all of that." Beerus dismissed the conversation, breaking apart his chopsticks. "Let's all eat."

…

Beerus was overly pleased with the meal. If something tasted good to him, he didn't hold back from commenting on it. Whis's food was excellent, of course, but Goku's cooking was no exception.

"Say, Goku, what did you call these things again? They're delicious." Beerus asked, after scarfing down yet another one of the pork cutlets that Goku had made.

"Oh, uh, that's Tonkatsu. They're a type of pork cutlet, it's made using boneless pork loin…" Goku explained, nervously scratching the back of his head.

"Well, if you want my opinion, Whis should have you cook with him more often." Beerus eyed him curiously.

"I don't know anything about that, but… I'm just glad you like it, Lord Beerus…" Goku said, bashful at the compliment, but he was more focused on Vegeta's reaction. He did seem to be gorging his down so maybe he could take that as a compliment. Then again, Saiyans would eat almost anything whether they liked it or not.

"Believe me, if I *didn't* like it, I'd have probably destroyed you by now." Beerus said, but it seemed to be more of a joke. Though they could never be sure with him.

Whis commented with some amusement. "You know, I am sort of curious what Vegeta thinks about all of this since he's the one Goku really made the Tonkatsu for."

"Hold on, I'm what now?" Vegeta looked up upon feeling Whis's and Beerus's eyes on him. Goku, however, was now avoiding his gaze. Vegeta really didn't like being put in the spotlight over a matter such as this one, but he already knew that nobody would be satisfied until he gave an answer. He turned his head away, his cheeks flushed from embarrassment as he muttered a response. "...They taste… fine, I guess…"

Goku's heart fluttered in response at the compliment, but neither he nor Vegeta said anything to each other for a while after that.

That was until Goku eventually found himself gazing back at the food in front of him with some apprehension.

" *Eat* , Goku." Beerus's voice cut him off. "I'll have you know I don't take very kindly to food being wasted on my planet."

"Oh, uh, r-right… Sorry…" Goku murmured. The idea of stomaching anything right now scared him, but he knew he had no choice at this point. He *had* to eat or Beerus wouldn't be very happy about it and he didn't want to risk making him angry.

So, much to the visible relief of everybody in the room, Goku ate.

But even the small amount, he felt like it was too much for him.

Once again, he wanted to throw up.

…

Over the course of the next couple weeks, Vegeta started catching glimpses of burn marks on Goku's wrists after he'd taken baths. And despite all the sharp objects that he knew of having been locked away, he couldn't help but get the uncomfortable feeling that Goku had somehow found another object to hurt himself with.

Even so, he didn't have the heart to check, or to watch him bathe, because, in Vegeta's eyes, that involved breaking the set boundaries they had established. He couldn't cross that line, he just *couldn't* , no matter how much probably should have - to ensure Goku's safety.

…

Vegeta didn't always comment on the new marks he saw. What more was there he could say that he hadn't already? He was sure it was starting to annoy Goku, being told the same thing over and over again, that he could come to him, so, feeling like a broken record and not knowing if it was the right approach, at a certain point he stopped mentioning it. As long as Goku didn't have any known access to sharp objects, and wasn't hurting himself right in front of him, Vegeta tried his hardest to focus more on just spending time with him and letting him know that he was *wanted* . He needed Goku to know that, more than anything.

And yet, even now, Vegeta still couldn't bring himself to say *those words*.

He knew it was unfair to hold out like this, but for some reason or another, the more those words left Goku's mouth, the harder Vegeta found it to finally push past his reservations and just spit it out already.

Was it pride? Vegeta didn't know. Down deep, he *wanted* to say it to him. But for some reason or another, he kept telling himself that it didn't feel natural.

Goku never asked why, of course, but Vegeta could tell it was hurting him every time his statement of love went unreturned.

And it did, but Goku didn't complain, even if there were times his throat burned with unshed tears because those were the words he needed to hear.

Just *three words* . So why wouldn't Vegeta say them?

Am I not good enough?

He must be getting tired of me.

Is he going to leave me, after all, then?

I guess I can't blame him if he does.

There are still things I haven't been able to give him either.

Maybe that's why.

These were thoughts that ran through his head often nowadays.

But he was too nice to say it, he didn't *deserve* to, it would make him ungrateful.

So he had to bottle up those doubts and keep them locked up inside, just like he did everything else.

Because he wanted to give Vegeta the space he needed.

He couldn't force him to say something he didn't want to say or to feel something he didn't feel.

So even if Vegeta chose to break things off with him in the end, he tried to tell himself he would be okay with that, because all he wanted was for Vegeta to be happy.

But then if that was true, then why did the thought of Vegeta leaving him and finding somebody else because of this hurt so badly?

Goku only realized then just how selfish he was.

…

The night before New Years Eve, Goku had another nightmare, and it was probably one of the worst ones he had had since the beginning.

Because this wasn't a dream about ***that man*** .

No, this one was about *Vegeta* .

And it was absolutely ridiculous.

It's not even real.

Vegeta wouldn't do that sort of thing to me…

So what am I crying for?

I feel betrayed over nothing.

With frustration, he continued to wipe away his tears.

I couldn't move.

Stumbling out of bed, he could hardly breathe. His chest was hurting like crazy.

His first thought, however, wasn't to go to the bathroom like he usually did. Instead, he chose to take a walk out to the lake, so he could be alone.

When he left the room, he had to lean against the wall for support, gasping for air. Due to the panic attack, he could feel his arms becoming numb and tingling. Almost like the circulation in his body was being cut off. After a while, he found himself outside.

He could have sworn that he heard a voice, but, due to the mix of the memories and his mental state, he was too out of it to respond or perceive it as real. He wanted nothing to do with *anybody* right now.

For a moment, he ignored it, until Whis appeared in front of him, startling him.

"Goku, I believe I just asked you a question." The angel said, his eyes narrowing slightly.

"Sorry…, what…?" Goku slurred, struggling to look up at him.

"I asked you where you're going." Whis paused, before brushing a thumb across his cheek. "And are you crying?"

Goku flinched at the touch.

"No, it's… nothing." He sniffled, wiping away his tears again, frustrated that they kept falling. "I'm just… taking a walk."

"...I see." Whis pondered it. "Well, just… try not to fall, alright…?"

"Thanks... I-I'll be careful…" Goku's voice was low, barely above a whisper.

Whis watched quietly as Goku walked past him. There was a glint of uncertainty in his eyes, but in the end, he turned back around, going his own route.

…

The place Goku found himself at was at the lake. Thoughts and images swarmed through his head.

The feeling of betrayal wouldn't leave him.

It's just a stupid dream.

*It wasn't **real** .*

*Vegeta wouldn't do something like that, to me or **anybody***, he told himself yet again.

So why is this bothering me so much?

Maybe because it reminded him of his own **weakness**.

His **naivety**.

It was somebody he **trusted**.

What's wrong with me?

Why am I dreaming about something like that?

Arms pinning him down.

A cold smirk.

A voice telling him to shut up; to stop struggling. Saying some of the same things as *that man* did.

A hand covering his mouth to stop him from screaming.

He could barely move. But he had cried out for him to stop.

Multiple times.

Only for his sobs to be silenced and ignored.

I want it gone.

In that moment, there was only one thing going through his head.

The urge to bleed.

To **hurt**.

…

Vegeta woke up late in the night to find the bed space next to him empty. He decided to wait at first, like he always did, but when Goku didn't return after a certain amount of time, he finally decided to check the bathroom.

"Kakarot…?" He knocked on the door.

No answer.

Opening the door, he found that it was empty. Goku wasn't there.

That's when it suddenly dawned on him.

He couldn't feel his ki.

Goku was either suppressing it or something had happened.

Where could he have gone…?!

Think… Think…

The memories of seeing the cuts on Goku's wrist and leg - the burn marks - flashed into his head, causing him to fall into an immediate panic.

No, he wouldn't…!

Slipping on his boots, he ran for the door, calling out Goku's name once he got outside. Upon not receiving an answer, he flew around a bit to see if he could find him.

"Kakarot!" His heart pounded in his chest. He knew he might have been overreacting, but he didn't care. With things as they *had* been, one would be wrong *not* to worry.

A few minutes later, he spotted the familiar outline of Whis, flying over to him.

"Whis!" He shouted. "I need your help! It's Kakarot, I can't seem to find him! I… Please, I need you to tell me where he is!"

The truth was Vegeta hadn't searched everywhere, but having Whis locate him would be better than searching the whole planet aimlessly.

"Well, I did happen to see him a short while ago, but…" Whis faltered. "He didn't mention where he was going... Hold on a moment."

Whis sighed, before he used his staff to locate Goku with ease. When he did so, however, There was a noticeable shift in his mood that even Vegeta was able to pick up on. "Oh my."

"What's wrong?! Did you find him?! Is he okay?!" Vegeta demanded, in a frenzy.

"Well, he's by the lake, but he appears to be unconscious. You should probably-" Whis started to say, but Vegeta had already flown off before he could finish his sentence.

Unconscious?!

Shitshitshitshit!

Vegeta made his way towards the lake as fast as he possibly could have.

He didn't know how much time had passed because he was focused on one thing and one thing only.

Being with his lover.

When he reached his destination, there he saw him. Goku was laying on the ground in front of a tree.

"Kakarot!" Vegeta landed by his side, inspecting the damage.

Blood was *everywhere* . All over his gi, on his wrist and even in the grass.

"Kakarot, can you hear me?!" Vegeta shook his shoulder. Goku was unconscious but at least he was breathing.

Pulling him into his arms, he reached into his uniform, fumbling around for what he was looking for. "Shit, where the hell is that Senzu bean… I know I had one left… *Damn it… Of all the*- There it is . "

Once he found it, it slipped out of his hand, because he was shaking so badly due to nerves, but he didn't care.

He hastily wiped the dirt off of it, taking it into his mouth and chewing it up. Not having a better idea in mind, he leaned in, delivering it to Goku through saliva in the same way he had seen Trunks do with Mai.

He could only hope it didn't cause him to choke.

Fortunately, after a moment, Goku began to stir in his arms. Vegeta watched with relief as Goku opened his eyes.

"Vegeta…" Goku tensed up a bit when Vegeta's hold on him became a borderline death grip. "Can't… breathe… You're hugging me too tight."

"You *idiot*... ! Do you have any idea how *worried* I was about you…? I swear to *god* , Kakarot, if you *ever* do *anything* like that again, I will kill you with my own two hands…" Vegeta couldn't even control himself anymore, he was actually sobbing now, just from the relief of seeing Goku awake again. He loosened his grip somewhat, but his body was still shaking.

"I'm sorry… I didn't…" Goku murmured, feeling worse than ever at the sight.

That's when the realization dawned on him. Liquid formed in his eyes all over again, and he immediately tried to sit up, looking around frantically, as if he were trying to find something.

"Hey, it's okay… You're alright now… Stop that..." Vegeta said, keeping him in his hold, afraid that he was going to kill himself with the way he was acting, especially after what had just happened.

"No, let go of me, you don't *understand*... I need it to stop... *Please,* Vegeta…" Goku begged.

"Need *what* to stop? Hey, look at me. What are you talking about?" Vegeta tried to get him to face him, but Goku completely refused to cooperate. He wasn't thinking straight at all.

That's when Vegeta's eyes caught sight of what Goku was looking for; something that he was trying to reach out towards.

A *shard of white glass* . *Specifically* , one that appeared to be from one of the cups in the kitchen.

That's *what he's after?!*

Vegeta wordlessly held him back in disbelief.

Surprisingly enough, however, it was Whis who grabbed the shard, just in time to keep Goku from getting his hands on it. He had arrived only moments before to witness their scuffle.

"I'm sorry, but I really don't think you need this, Goku..." he said, now holding it in his hand.

Upon seeing that, Goku stifled a sob, knowing fully well that he had already lost at this point. So his next instinct was to scratch himself, and he almost succeeded had Vegeta's hold on him not been as strong as it was.

"That's *enough* , Kakarot. You're to stop this at once." Vegeta said, sternly, his voice cracking.

After hearing that, Goku finally listened.

"Now, I want you to tell me what's going on… Did you have another nightmare?" Vegeta encouraged, leaning him back against the tree.

"...I don't want to talk about it. I just want it to go away…" Goku choked out.

"You keep saying that, but you still haven't told me what you *mean* by that…" Vegeta said, not sure at this point what Goku was referring to. Clearly something had upset him, and this didn't seem to be his usual nightmares.

"Do you think it's possible he's referring to the memories?" Whis suggested after a bit.

"I thought so too, but I don't know… This seems different somehow… Whatever it is is really bothering him." Vegeta said, with uncertainty.

Whis sighed, as he kneeled down in front of him, catching his eyes. "Goku, I'm going to have ask that you be more specific. We can't help you unless we know what's going on."

His words were similar to Vegeta's, but slightly different.

"I *can't* …" Goku refused. "I'm afraid to. It's Vegeta... I don't want him to be mad at me…"

"You think I'll be mad at you-For *what* ?" Vegeta was becoming more and more concerned by the moment. He now knew this had something to do with him and he needed to know why.

"It's *nothing* … I just… need to…" Goku refused to give any coherent answers, continuing to fight back in an attempt to dig into his wrist.

Vegeta was completely at the end of his rope now. He could see that Goku wasn't going to listen to reason, so he did the only thing he could think of. "I'm sorry… But I can't let you hurt yourself…"

With the usage of ki rings - Something he had wanted to avoid at all costs for something like this except as a last resort - Vegeta restrained him completely.

Only then did Goku finally stop struggling, his arms and wrists now bound at his sides. He lowered his head, his bangs shadowing his eyes.

"Do you want one of your fidgets? I'll let you hold one." Vegeta offered, trying to come up with something. Even if Goku said he didn't like using them often, it was better to offer it to him than nothing.

"No, I don't want them." Goku's shoulders trembled as sobs continued to escape his lips. His breaths were uneven as he once again started gasping for air.

Vegeta swallowed, sitting back as he placed the putty beside him. "Then what can I do? You've got to give me something to work with here."

"I don't *know* , okay…? I don't understand this anymore than *you* do…" Goku finally admitted.

This left them at a stand still.

"Look, it's true that I might not understand this *entirely* , but I am *trying* to, so… I just want you to trust me…" Vegeta was finally starting to snap from the heartbreak of almost losing him and it was showing.

"I *do* trust you…, but there's nothing you can do to fix this, or *me* …, even *I* can't…" Goku trailed off, clutching his fists so tightly that his nails dug into the palm of his hand.

Vegeta lowered his head, his shoulders shaking. He felt like he had been defeated.

Whis sighed. "...Goku, I know I offered this suggestion to you before, but I'll ask you once more. Would you like to try holding ice? I think it might help you…"

Goku sniffled, thinking about it for a moment. "I-"

"Yeah! Let's do that, okay?" Vegeta added, desperate at this point.

"Mn." Goku uttered with uncertainty, not seeming too happy about it.

When Whis produced a small bag of ice from his staff, he handed it to Vegeta. "Here, Vegeta. I'll let you handle this…"

Vegeta grabbed it, pulling out one of the ice cubes and placing the rest beside him.

"Kakarot, I'm going to move your arm now, alright?" He turned Goku's wrist over and pressed the frozen substance against the area where he had previously started scratching himself. He didn't care if it numbed his fingers or hand, if there was the slimmest chance it would help his lover, then the pain was worth it.

Surprisingly enough, Goku's breathing seemed to regulate, his tears slowly coming to a halt as the ice melted bit by bit on his skin.

"There… Is that helping any?" Vegeta inquired softly.

"Mhm." Goku nodded sheepishly. The cold sensation actually managed to ground him somewhat and keep his focus more on that than on the memories.

"See? I *told* you it *would* , *didn't* I?" Whis smiled.

"Yeah…" Goku said. "It doesn't… get rid of the urges completely, but I guess it does… help some…"

"Well, I'm glad to hear it, Goku…" Whis said, before looking at Vegeta as he stood up. "...Vegeta, may I have a word with you?"

"What is it?" Vegeta got up, his hand lingering on Goku's arm for only a moment longer before realizing that Whis wanted him to follow him. He handed Goku the bag of ice. "Here, hold this. I'll be right back."

"Wait, Vegeta… What about the… ki rings…?" Goku started to protest in a low voice as Vegeta walked off after Whis, but Vegeta didn't hear him. He couldn't help but feel a bit dejected, but, in the end, he forced himself to revert his attention back to the feeling of the ice in his hand.

Once Whis and Vegeta were far enough away to talk privately, Whis spoke back up.

"This isn't exactly what I had in mind when I said to keep a closer eye on him, Vegeta."

"Yeah, I know. I screwed up, okay? You can lecture me later." Vegeta muttered. "But what else can I do…? It's not like I can be with him all the time… There has to be some other way…"

"Well, I suppose you have a point…" Whis mused. "...Not that I have an issue with him being here, but if you want *my* advice… Perhaps it would be best if Goku returned to Earth for now. You two have friends there that can help care for him when you are unable to, such as Bulma."

"But he doesn't even *want* to be on Earth right now…" Vegeta argued weakly.

"Be that as it may, it's possible you might not be left with much of a choice in the matter. *If* you want Goku to get the support he *needs* , that is…" Whis said. "Besides, are there not also other options such as medication or doctors that could help him with this?"

Vegeta almost wanted to protest further, but, deep down, he knew the angel wasn't saying any of this to be cruel or judgmental, he was absolutely right. Even if Goku didn't want to be on earth right now, he *needed* constant surveillance, and, as Whis had mentioned, *medication* until all of this could be sorted out. "...I understand… We'll go back tomorrow."

"...Oh, that's right. You had a festival you were planning on attending, didn't you?" Whis ruminated.

Vegeta gazed away, a downcast look on his face. "Yeah…"

…

"It appears he's fallen asleep." Whis noted with some amusement when he and Vegeta came back to discover that Goku had dozed off.

"I swear… He's such a child…" Vegeta had said that so many times before, but his expression was soft as he kneeled down next to him, caressing his lover's sleeping face.

He looks so peaceful…

After a moment, Vegeta broke the ki rings on Goku's wrists before lifting him into his arms and holding him tight - like his life depended on it.

Not caring that Whis was watching, he kissed his forehead. "I'm taking him back to bed…"

"That is probably for the best, yes." Whis said simply. "But before you go..."

Vegeta looked up at him, a bit surprised when Whis used his staff to clean the blood off his and Goku's clothes.

"We wouldn't want you tracking blood through the house, would we?"

"...Thanks... for… helping." Vegeta mumbled, before flying off immediately after. He had no idea how Whis would have responded, but he didn't care. He was more focused on Goku.

…

Vegeta brought Goku to the bedroom and laid him down in the bed.

Tears obstructed his vision as he spread the covers over them, watching him sleep.

"Vegeta…" Goku said in a low, groggy voice, starting to shake. "I-I'm sorry… I know I scared you… I was so upset at the time that I wasn't thinking about anything else and-"

"Shh… It's alright now… You're safe… That's all that matters to me..." Vegeta kissed him, fingers gently running through his hair and tucking some of it behind his ear.

Goku pulled back, slightly flushed, but still visibly anxious. "Y-You're not mad at me? I swear I won't do it again, so please… don't leave me over this… You won't, will you?"

"No… No, Kakarot, I'm not going to leave you…" Vegeta assured him, before urging desperately for an explanation. "Still… can you at least… tell me why? Surely, you must have had a *reason* , right? So please… Help me understand…"

Goku knew he owed Vegeta this much, after everything he had just put him through.

"...It was… another nightmare… But it was… about *you* … and I… I don't know why… It wasn't even real… but it still hurt… so much… I was so scared… yet I know you wouldn't do something like that to me, so *why* ? Why am I having dreams like that…? I want it to go away…" Goku covered his face with one of his hands, to hide the tears.

Vegeta's eyes widened, his heart breaking as he finally realized why Goku was so afraid of him being mad. Because the nightmare he'd had was about *him* . Was it because they were together now? For him to be having such a dream must have meant that there was some part of Goku that still didn't trust him.

Was this a hint that he had stepped over a line somehow without knowing it?

"I… I'm sorry… I hadn't… realized… *Tell me* ," Vegeta said, frantically. "if I've done *anything* that's made you feel uncomfortable… or *unsafe* with me, I swear I'll *stop* , and I'll never do it again… I would *never* knowingly hurt you, or scare you..."

"It's nothing *like* that…, I told you before, you haven't done *anything wrong* …" Goku insisted. "This whole time you've been nothing but kind to me… and I *do* trust you. Maybe that's why… I'm having dreams like this… because… some part of me… is afraid… of that trust being broken…"

"But you know I *wouldn't*... I would *never* do something so horrible to you… or *anybody for that matter*... That man was a ***monster*** . "

"Yeah, I know that… You're *better* than him… I *know* you are… *Way* better…" Goku said, cupping his cheeks in his hands, hesitantly kissing him.

Vegeta returned it, before hugging him tighter. "...I… love you, Kakarot…"

Upon hearing those words, Goku felt a warmth well up in his chest.

"Haha…" his voice cracked. "You finally said it to me… I was worried you weren't going to… or that you didn't… feel the same way as me.…."

"Of *course* I do. Even if I *don't* always say it… I *do* …" Vegeta's expression became painful as the other man trembled in his arms. He cursed himself for being so stubborn before. Those words had meant more to Goku than he even realized.

Yet, some part of it hurt to think about because, in the end, words were just words. Somebody could easily lie to him with such words then hurt him anyways. That was the harsh reality of the universe.

People lied. Even Goku knew this fact, he had seen it with Raditz and multiple others. Just like he witnessed it with the man who raped him.

Still, for some reason or another, he wanted to trust Vegeta. He wanted more than anything to believe that Vegeta *wouldn't* lie to him.

And Vegeta saw that.

But Goku's sense of trust now was a fragile thing, easy to break.

So Vegeta would do everything he could to protect and salvage that.

"...Listen. There's something we need to talk about…" Vegeta swallowed, continuing to run his fingers through Goku's hair. He thought about Whis's warning, and knew he had no choice but to do as he had suggested, but for some reason or another he didn't even know how to broach the subject. And yet, he knew he had to be upfront about this, Goku needed predictability instead of having something sprung on him. "About what happened… earlier… I've decided… that we need to go back to earth for a while…"

"Earth? But *why* ?" Goku quickly started to become upset. "I don't want to live there anymore… I *can't*... "

"I know… It's only temporary." Vegeta held his face affectionately, wiping away his tears. "We're going to get you a doctor, Kakarot... One that can make some of this pain you're feeling go away..."

"But I don't *need* a doctor... All I want right now is to be *away* from there, away from ***him,*** *and* ***everything else*** ... Please, Vegeta, don't make me stay there anymore…" Goku practically pled.

"I promise we'll come back here, as soon as we get you on some medication… and know that your feelings are at least manageable. As things are, this trauma is *destroying* you…" Vegeta uttered with a heavy chest.

"...So... We can really come back after I get some medicine?" Goku looked at him with uncertainty.

"Yes, we'll come back. But… also there's something else… I need you to know…" Vegeta began, hesitantly.

"What is it…?" Goku asked, nervously.

"From now on… I can't… allow you to be alone anymore…" It took everything Vegeta had in him to say it. "That means… when you… bathe… or use the bathroom, or anything else… somebody will need to be with you at all times…"

Goku didn't respond, but Vegeta understood why, this wasn't pleasant for either one of them.

*I have no idea what I'm even **doing** anymore... but what other choice do I **have…** ?*

"I'm sorry…" Vegeta's voice was weak. "I'm not… doing this to hurt you, or scare you. I'm only… trying to protect you, and I can't… risk something like this happening again…"

"...I don't… want you to see my body…, not after what he did to me…" Goku knew that Vegeta wasn't doing this out of ill intent. He was only laying a rule like this down so he couldn't hurt himself, but that didn't mean Goku wanted to accept it. Especially not the idea of Vegeta looking at his body when he bathed. "And the scars look terrible… You'll think they're disgusting…"

Disgusting.

There was that word *yet again* . A slightly different context maybe, but in the end it all boiled down to the same thing.

Approval over his body.

Approval which meant *everything* to Goku.

Despite Vegeta's own trauma, he had no real idea how to console him right now. He was attracted to him, but that didn't mean he wanted to objectify him.

What am I supposed to say?

*When is he going to realize his **value** to me? That he's so much more than his body?*

"Your body… is the same to me as it's *always* been…" He said. "It's like I told you before, you're… a *beautiful man* , Kakarot, and scars aren't going to change how I feel about you, *regardless* what form they may take… Do you know why?" Vegeta flipped up his wrist cuff, kissing his wrist. "It's because these scars… They represent your struggle to survive… They're physical proof of the

battle you've been facing - The one that's been raging inside of your head for months now, maybe even years. But you don't have to fight that battle *alone* anymore… Because I'm here *with* you and I'm willing to do *anything I have to* to help you *beat* this. But I can only do that if you're willing to accept my help… So… will you? Please…"

After hearing his words, Goku was quiet for another long moment as he looked into Vegeta's eyes, desperately searching for any sign of judgment or ulterior motives. He found none. "...Okay…"

"You'll… really… do it…?" Vegeta asked.

"...Yeah… I know you… just want what's best for me, right…?" Goku replied, barely audible.

And Vegeta *did* , but despite everything, this still felt *wrong* , like an invasion of privacy.

But as much as he hated to admit it, this was the most logical approach he could take to a situation like this.

Meeting Goku's lips with his own, he looked into his eyes with a tender gaze. "You're so strong, you know that? And *brave* too…"

"You're always saying that about me…" Goku blushed slightly.

"That's because it's *true*... You *are* strong. You're one of the strongest people I know." Vegeta said.

"Still… What happened earlier-"

"What happened earlier is irrelevant." Vegeta interjected. "What matters is that you get back up and keep fighting, no matter *how many times* you screw up… You understand…?"

"...Mhm…"

"Good…" Vegeta replied, rubbing the top of his head in a petting notion. "Now get some sleep. We have a date to go to, so I want you fully rested when we leave tomorrow."

I can't sleep tonight… But that's okay…

Making sure he's safe is the only thing that's important to me right now.

…

The next day, it didn't take long for Vegeta to have regrets about their date.

Not regrets about spending time with Goku - No, he could never regret *that* - But a ***festival*** ?

*What in the world was I even **thinking** , inviting him to something like this?*

Person after person bumped into him, testing his patience bit by bit.

*This crowd is **unbearable** !*

"Cotton candy, you say? Oh my, how creative. It's fluffy like cotton, but the taste is *divine* ! It even melts right in your mouth."

"Right? I thought you might like it."

And then there was Beerus and Whis.

Of course they had to come upon hearing there was food. This ultimately meant he had to pay for theirs as well because Bulma had chosen not to come. Fortunately, he had loads of money to spare on his card, essentially *unlimited* funds, but that didn't make this any less irritating.

Damn them. This was supposed to be a date between me and Kakarot. I didn't come here to be some ***chaperone*** .

"Darn it, not again… I keep aiming too low."

Vegeta looked over to see that Goku was preoccupied by a dart challenge. He walked over next to him.

"Let me try. I'll show you how it's done." Vegeta reached out towards his hand.

"Just give me a bit. I can do this." Goku retorted, not wanting to share.

"There are multiple darts, you ass. Don't hog them all." Vegeta snatched a few out of his hand before making his aim. Surprisingly, he hit a bullseye on the first try. And the second. Just barely the third.

"Woah, you're pretty good at this, Vegeta." Goku said in amazement. "How'd you do that?!"

"It's easy." Vegeta scoffed. "All you have to do is aim higher than you actually want to hit."

Goku tried again, his eyebrows furrowing in frustration when he missed the shot again. "Well, now it's too *high* !"

"You're *hopeless* ." Vegeta scoffed.

"Hey, Vegeta, wanna see who can catch the most goldfish?" Goku suddenly asked with a grin, already having found another stall to preoccupy himself with.

"Goldfish scooping? Isn't that considered to be for children?" Vegeta deadpanned. If this were regular fishing, that'd be one thing, but normally he only saw kids doing kingyo sukui. Then again,

he didn't keep up to date with Earth's customs.

" *No* . Adults can enjoy it too." Goku corrected him, pouting a bit.

"Of course *you* would say that. But fine." Vegeta caved, paying the stall keeper for two poi and bowls.

The truth was, he couldn't pass up the opportunity to compete against him. They may be partners now but, as far as he liked to tell himself, they were still rivals even if Goku wasn't training at this current time.

The two stood next to each other at the fishtub, positioning their poi into the water to get a fish. Goku managed to scoop two into his bowl before his thoughts got interrupted by the voice of some kids next to him. They appeared to be arguing.

Momentarily, Goku forgot that he was in the middle of a game. He turned his head back to realize his poi had broken.

"Aw man, I left it in too long…!" Goku cursed under his breath.

"Well, well well." Vegeta gloated, having gathered four goldfish in his bowl. "I guess that means I *win* ***this one***, Kakarot."

"Yeah, I kinda got a little distracted a bit there." Goku laughed, scratching the back of his head. "Here, uh, do you maybe want mine? I highly doubt Chichi would like it very much if I suddenly dumped them on her and Goten to take care of."

"Keep them. I have no need for fish. Our cat would probably end up trying to eat them anyway. I'm putting mine back in." Vegeta said.

"Alright." Goku said. "I guess I'll put mine back as well then."

They then went another round which ended up being a tie at three each.

It was after that that Vegeta was called over by Whis.

Not wanting to drag Goku around with him every time Beerus or Whis called him over, Vegeta let him stay there. They were in public, so he thought it would be okay.

Goku was left alone. He looked away, catching sight of a Takoyaki stand, his stomach growling at the sight.

It just *had* to be one of those times that his body was acting against him again, *betraying* him.

Man, those look delicious…

But they're 1,500 Zenni for a tray of six…

He bit his lip when he saw the stall keeper meet his eyes.

It's not that I don't have enough, but… what's the point of wasting the little bit I do have when it could be used on something more important?

I need to hold off…

"Something catch your eye?"

A voice stopped him from walking off. It was Vegeta.

"Oh, uh…" Goku looked up at him, before shaking his head and turning away again. "No, it's nothing…"

He was avoiding his gaze, a guilty expression on his face.

"Bullshit." Vegeta folded his arms, leaning in towards him with an intense stare. "There's something you *want* , isn't there? And judging by the direction you were staring at, I'll bet it's those Takoyaki, am I wrong?"

"..." Goku couldn't bring himself to answer.

"Well? Spit it out already." Vegeta urged him.

"I mean… They do… look good…" Goku admitted, barely above a whisper. It was a surprise that Vegeta even heard him. "but I don't really have a lot of zenni on me right now… I'll just… wait until I can eat something later…"

"What? Now just hold on a minute, you idiot…" Vegeta grabbed his hand to stop him from leaving. "What part of *I'm covering all of your expenses* are you not understanding?"

Goku was quiet for a moment.

Vegeta sighed a bit. "Look, I'm fully aware of your current financial situation, so it would have been cruel of me to invite you to somewhere like a festival if you couldn't afford the stuff you wanted. That's why *I'm* paying, So *you* don't have to."

"Is this… really okay, though? You keep buying me stuff and I…" Goku mumbled. "I don't have any way to pay you back right now..."

"Kakarot…" Vegeta placed his hands on Goku's face forcing him to meet his eyes. "Do you know what I really want right now? What would mean more to me than money, or anything physical?"

"What…?" Goku asked.

"For you to *stop worrying* and just *enjoy* yourself." Vegeta emphasized. "That's what this date is *for* , so forget the stupid zenni already. Do you want Takoyaki or not?"

"....Mhm." Goku finally admitted in a low voice.

"Hmph. *See* , now was that really so difficult…?" Vegeta scoffed a bit, before he let go and bought a couple trays from the stall keeper.

It couldn't be helped. Chichi had always been unpredictable in whether she'd buy stuff like that for him or not. She always talked about the importance of saving money. Not that he could blame her for it. In comparison to Bulma's family, they weren't exactly rich.

Vegeta then handed one to Goku, "Here."

"Thanks, Vegeta..." Goku took it from him with a small smile.

"Yeah, whatever." Vegeta mumbled.

As they ate, they walked beside each other, neither one of them saying much for a while, instead opting to observe the surrounding crowd. There were some people walking around with masks.

When they finished, they threw their trays into the trash.

Vegeta later brought Goku to a stall selling ikayaki and sake.

He bought a stick of ikayaki for both of them, as well as some sake for himself.

"Here." He said holding one of the sticks out for him.

"Thanks." Goku said.

"You want a drink?" Vegeta offered.

"I really shouldn't… Chichi says that that stuff is bad for me, and I don't really like the taste of it, so I usually try to avoid it." Goku fidgeted, afraid that Vegeta would tease him or something for choosing to avoid it.

"Suit yourself." Vegeta took a sip of his, not caring one way or the other. If Goku didn't feel comfortable drinking, then it was fine if he didn't.

Vegeta had been drinking since the time he was five, so this was normal to him, even if he didn't drink as much as he used to, for multiple reasons.

At some point, he had told himself he needed to cut back, not liking how susceptible it made him. It couldn't be helped by the fact that he had grown up witnessing people in the Frieza Force behave like wild animals when under the influence.

But right now, he told himself he needed this. Just to wind down a bit.

Over the course of the next hour, the two Saiyans competed against each other in numerous other games, Goku finding himself particularly drawn to katanuki.

"Hah! I win again, Kakarot…" Vegeta had just carved out a perfect rabbit from his candy board for the sixth time versus Goku who had only managed to carve out two.

His speech was slightly slurred and his face flushed from the alcohol, but he did genuinely seem to be enjoying himself, so Goku couldn't complain too much.

That, of course, didn't mean he wasn't salty about messing up yet again.

"I don't get it. Why does mine keep breaking…? What am I doing wrong?" He pouted with frustration, looking at his umbrella which had just snapped in half.

"You're fucking terrible at this." Vegeta laughed a bit, feeling drowsy.

"I wanna try again." Goku said with resolve as he ate the broken candy board and grabbed another.

"Sure, if you actually think you can do it..." Vegeta jeered.

"Just wait, this time I'll get it for sure." Goku vowed.

Vegeta didn't bother to pick up another one this time, he was more content just watching Goku squirm over this. It was too amusing.

Goku was secretly confused as to how Vegeta had even been able to carve so many candy boards so perfectly despite clearly being somewhat drunk. Shouldn't it have messed with his coordination?

Distracted, he accidentally pricked himself with the thumbtack he was holding.

" *Ow…!* " He hissed in pain.

"Hey, be more careful…!" Vegeta scolded him, a bit concerned when Goku drew back. He grabbed his hand to inspect the damage. It wasn't too bad but there was a bit of blood.

"Need a bandage?" The stall-keeper offered.

"I'm good…" Goku said.

"Here, I'll give you one anyway just in case." The man handed him it to him anyways.

"Oh, uh, thanks." Goku replied, before opening it up. Vegeta took it from him and carefully wrapped the bandage around Goku's finger to catch the crimson liquid. It wasn't that Goku was helpless, Vegeta just figured it would be easier to have assistance when a person was putting a bandage on one's own finger, hand or arm. Besides, he had pretty much gotten used to tending to Goku's injuries at this point, so it was inevitable. "Great. Now hurry up and finish that candy board already, so we can go somewhere else."

The sight of the thumbtack was suddenly making him feel uneasy. Anything sharp that made Goku bleed did. Was he just being over-protective? He didn't know. He never really got this way during sparring matches unless Goku had one of his panic attacks.

"Okay…" Surprisingly, Goku actually got it right this time.

…

In wanage, Goku got a slightly higher score than Vegeta. Vegeta huffed a bit but didn't say too much.

Despite Goku's original desire not to spend any money, he ended up buying a black necklace with an obsidian spearhead pendant on it. "Hey, Vegeta, I want you to have this."

"A necklace? There's no way in hell I'm putting that thing on." Vegeta muttered, folding his arms. "Wear it yourself."

"Oh, come on, ya *gotta* try it on." Goku said. "I bought it just for *you* ."

"I said no." Vegeta retorted.

"Please? For me?" Goku begged.

"Oh, now you're guilt tripping me over jewelry, is that it?" Vegeta deadpanned. "Well, it's not going to- Hey!"

Goku had already unclasped it, reaching around his neck to fasten it.

"Just hold still a moment. I'm almost done." Goku said, grinning when it was around Vegeta's neck. "There."

"I hope you know I'm going to take this off later…" Vegeta grumbled bitterly, feeling ridiculous. That's when the realization crossed his mind. "Hold on, did you just say you *bought* this?"

"Yeah…" Goku confirmed, seeing no problem. "Why?"

"Kakarot…!" Vegeta snapped in disbelief. "You couldn't even afford to buy yourself *food* earlier, but then you went and bought *me a necklace* ? Let me guess, you spent all the money you had on this thing too, didn't you…?"

"I… Sorry…" Goku turned his head away, slightly hurt by his outburst. "I just… wanted to get something nice for you, after everything you've done for me… I didn't… mean to make you angry."

Vegeta pulled back, feeling a pang of guilt for yelling at him. This had obviously meant a lot to him.

"...Look, I'm not… *angry* . It's just…" He sighed, moving closer and hugging him, knowing he couldn't just leave things as they were. "You didn't need to get me anything… Still… Thanks. It's just my style..."

He had to say *something* .

"Really?" Goku smiled softly at hearing that. "...I'm glad you like it…"

…

"Look, Vegeta, it's a cockatiel!" Some time later that night, Goku found himself running off towards a woman who was showing off her bird.

"Hey, hold on a minute, Kakarot! Damn it all…" Vegeta had to run after him, only then realizing just how off balance he was the moment somebody accidentally bumped into him.

He almost lost his footing, but caught himself just in the nick of time. He clutched at his head, trying to fight off the wave of dizziness that passed over him.

I sometimes forget just how strong sake can be… I thought I'd have better control than this…

When he reached Goku's side, Goku was already petting the cockatiel's neck. The cockatiel was clearly enjoying being scratched.

"Is this a boy or girl?" Goku asked out of curiosity.

"It's a boy." The woman said with a smile.

"Ohhh, he's really cute. What's his name?" Goku wanted to know.

"It's Yuuichi." The woman looked over at Vegeta who was eyeing it. "Would you like to pet him?"

"Uh, no, I really shouldn't." Vegeta said, with uncertainty. As far as he was concerned, animals like this were unpredictable.

"Come on, Vegeta, he won't bite. He's really friendly. See?" Goku encouraged him.

"Well… if you're sure…" Vegeta took off one of his gloves and hesitantly reached out towards the bird. Yuuichi bent his head down so he could pet him on the back of his head.

"His feathers are so soft…" Vegeta noted aloud.

As he realized that, he became more bold in petting it.

"Hey, I've been wondering about something. What's the big feather that sticks up on the top of his head for?" Goku suddenly asked.

"That's called a crest. It's used to communicate with other cockatiels, and even frighten away other species when it feels threatened." The woman explained.

"What's it mean when it goes back like that?" Goku took notice of the way his crest was moving back as Vegeta pet him.

"A cockatiel will put his crest back for one of two reasons, either it's happy or angry. He's happy right now."

"Can he talk?" Vegeta retracted his hand, but was still curious.

"Can you say pretty bird?" The woman asked, looking at Yuuichi.

"Pretty bird." Yuuichi mimicked, before receiving a treat.

"You wanna sing for me?" The woman encouraged him.

Much to Vegeta and Goku's amazement, Yuuichi started singing some sort of catchy tune after that.

"You've trained him well…" Vegeta complimented when several children suddenly ran up, wanting to play with Yuuichi.

"Thank you. He can be a handful, but he's a fast learner, so…"

"I see…" Vegeta pondered it.

"Thanks for letting us pet him." Goku smiled.

The woman beamed as they started to leave. "It's no problem."

…

"Would you like some ice cream?" Vegeta later asked, when they passed by a stall selling many frozen items, including sherbet, gelato, and even snow cones. He didn't want any himself, but he had to offer it anyway.

"Uh, sure. If you don't mind." Goku looked at Vegeta, a nervous expression on his face. He couldn't help but feel a bit disappointed in himself for not only putting him out like this, but also giving in and eating so much today.

But it was a one time thing, rationalized.

Once this was over he'd go back to his normal diet of avoiding anything that wasn't mostly liquid.

"Not at all." Vegeta assured him, before leading him to the stall. "What kind do you want exactly?"

"Vanilla is fine." Goku decided after glancing at the flavors and items for a second. If he actually tried to decide on something, they'd be there all day.

"Alright. Just give me a moment." Vegeta said.

Goku stood back, taking a seat on a nearby bench as he waited for him to buy it.

When Vegeta came over, he handed him his ice cream, sitting down beside him.

"Thanks…" Goku made no hesitation to start eating it.

"Hmph…" Vegeta crossed his arms and legs as he always did, but leaned back this time, watching him. He certainly seemed to be enjoying it.

"Is it really that good?" He asked with some amusement. He hadn't got any because he wasn't in the mood to eat an entire cone.

"Yeah, do you want to try some?" Goku offered, holding out the cone.

"I'm fine." Vegeta turned it down. "You eat it."

"Alright then. But don't say I didn't offer you some." Goku said, before he continued eating it.

"I wasn't going to." Vegeta muttered simply.

At some point, Vegeta's eyes became drawn to Goku's tongue as it flicked in and out of his mouth across the ice cream.

He swallowed, feeling as though the very sight of it was some sort of torture in itself, especially when he saw some of the white substance melt and drip down Goku's chin.

Just barely, he forced himself to turn away.

*Damn it all…! Why does he have to **lick** it like that? No, it's not **his** fault… He's just eating ice cream…*

He mentally cursed himself, turning away, bouncing his leg.

Stupidstupidstupid *just get out ofmyhead* ***already****.*

"Vegeta? Hey, what's wrong?" The prince jumped, startled when Goku placed a hand on his forehead to feel his temperature, leaning in to where their faces were only inches apart. "You're burning up and your face is all red. Are you not feeling well?"

Vegeta swallowed, the contact and close proximity surprising him, but softly took hold of his hand, trying not to blush even harder. "No, it's nothing. I'm just drunk, you idiot… Now let go of me."

In that moment, Vegeta felt like crap for letting his mind drift. It could be said that Goku still had a certain innocence about him when it came to these things, so there's no way he could have known.

"You sure? We can always go to a doctor or something if you need to." Goku offered, completely oblivious and slightly concerned. "I'm sure there's some around here."

"I said I'm fine. Just eat your ice cream already…" Vegeta grumbled, avoiding his gaze, before covering his face.

God, I'm terrible… I shouldn't be thinking about those things… What the hell is ***wrong*** *with me…?*

"Well, are you sure you don't want some?" Goku smirked, as he offered his cone again. He really didn't know when to lay off. "I really don't mind sharing."

"It depends, Kakarot. Wouldn't that be kind of like an… indirect *kiss*... ?" Kissing wasn't exactly what was on his mind right now, but Vegeta opted to tease him some anyways.

"A… k-kiss…?" Goku stammered, blushing at the thought, simply because the subject had seemingly come out of nowhere.

"Yeah, that's *right* . That's what it's called, anyway." Vegeta taunted, inching towards him with a devilish smirk. "When couples share food, they say it's actually quite *romantic* . But tell me, what

do *you* think about all of that…? May I?"

He wasn't usually the type who *ever* flirted much, even with Bulma (since she always seemed to have the upper hand with him), but, with Goku, it somehow felt natural to him and it was certainly well worth it if it meant he got to see such flustered expressions on his face.

Except he intentionally mixed up his his body language this time, to throw him off.

"...Huh? W-wait, Vegeta… People are watching." Goku leaned back slightly, but remained glued to his spot. When he heard 'kiss', that's exactly what he was thinking, and Vegeta wasn't making it any easier to know what his intentions were. "We shouldn't…"

Goku's heart pounded in his chest as he tried to gather his thoughts.

Is Vegeta really about to kiss me? Right ***now*** *?*

Not that I mind, but… this is all so sudden, I…

He nervously closed his eyes, mentally preparing himself.

"Shouldn't *what*… ?" Vegeta took a bite of his ice cream, completely breaking the suspense. Even though he preferred chocolate, the flavor was surprisingly pretty good and intense despite it being so basic. "Hm?"

"Huh? I-it's nothing." Some part of Goku was relieved, but another part of him almost felt as though he had been toyed with. "I just… I thought you were going to… Sorry… Forget I said anything, okay…?"

He was stumbling over his words right and left. Vegeta could tell he was anxious.

"Oh?" Vegeta's smirk intensified. "Let me guess, you thought I was going to *kiss* you, *didn't* you…?"

" *No.* Well, I mean. Look, it's not *my* fault you started mentioning something about an indirect kiss…" Goku weakly argued. "You confused me…! With the way that you were acting, I couldn't tell if you were talking about the ice cream or *me* anymore."

Well, that was certainly one way of putting it.

"I see... Well, do you *want* me to? To *kiss* you, I mean…" If Vegeta weren't drunk, there's no way he would have been this openly brazen right now, even if it *were* just to mess with him."

"I…" Goku was unsure how to even react to that.

"Don't worry, I'm joking... I already know that sort of thing is embarrassing for you. Heh, it's embarrassing for *me*, too…" Vegeta admitted. "I just… really wanted to tease you a bit… Sorry… I didn't scare you, did I…?"

"...N-No, not really… I'm just not used to seeing you act like this is all…" Goku laughed nervously, scratching the back of his head. "Wow, that alcohol must have really done a number on you, huh…?"

"Maybe… I admit I have been a little out of it… You mind if I rest my head on you for a while?" Vegeta asked, not wanting to overstep his boundaries.

"Uh. Okay… Sure, I guess I don't mind." Goku said, a bit awkward, but not opposed.

Vegeta then leaned the side of his face against the other man's chest as if it were a pillow, mumbling something beneath his breath containing the word 'soft'.

Goku's cheeks turned even pinker in response. It didn't take much to realize that he was referring to his pecs.

He didn't respond to that. Instead, he was quick to change the conversation. "You know, I'm kinda surprised you stayed here as long as you did. Usually you'd have left by now."

"I just *might* if you don't shut up about it." Vegeta scoffed.

Goku giggled, but he could tell he had no intentions of doing so.

Another brief silence.

"Come to think of it, they'll probably be shooting off fireworks soon…" He said.

"Mn." Vegeta uttered, tiredly. The mix of alcohol and lack of sleep were finally starting to catch up with him.

After that, Goku slowly finished off the rest of the ice cream cone he had been eating, allowing Vegeta to rest against him.

Once he finished, he felt the sudden urge to hold Vegeta's hand. His fingers were only centimeters away from Vegeta's when he started to debate if this was even a good idea.

What if Vegeta gets mad at me? He doesn't always respond very well to this sort of thing.

I know we've held hands before and all, but this is different.

Still…

Chichi used to do it with me sometimes, so… maybe I could with him too…?

Swallowing, he could feel his heart pounding in his chest. Despite the uncertainty he was feeling, he finally moved his hand over and acted on the temptation.

Vegeta opened his eyes in response, feeling a warmth enter his chest when he saw that Goku's hand was resting on his. Just this once, he decided to let it slide, intertwining their fingers.

For a long time, they just sat there, neither saying anything, Vegeta too tired to and Goku too awkward to.

In that moment, Whis approached Vegeta, asking for him to come with him again. "Vegeta, can you come here for a moment? Lord Beerus wishes to speak with you."

Vegeta cursed beneath his breath. He knew he had no choice but to get up.

"Stay here. I'll be right back." He mumbled, exhausted, before walking off and leaving Goku by himself. Maybe he wasn't using good reasoning, but, once again, he tried to tell himself Goku would be okay.

Despite being told to stay, however, Goku soon found himself following after Vegeta until he suddenly felt a hand touch his backside.

"'ey."

He looked to his side to see a middle aged burly man with a mustache and beard.

"That yer boyfriend?" The man asked, slurring his speech. He was holding a bottle of whiskey and his breath stank.

"Yeah, why?" Goku stammered nervously, not liking how his hands started roaming around his body. How could somebody even do something like this so casually in front of others?

"Jus' wonderin'. 've seen ya 'round before, at the martial arts tournament. Son Goku, yeh…?"

"You know me?" *Why am I just **freezing up**? Move. It should be so simple.*

"Yer pretty good."

"Thanks…"

"Hey, wanna ditch that guy'n come back with me for a while to my place?"

"I think I should stay here. There's actually something I need to talk about with him about." Goku came up with any random excuse he could to get the guy to lay off. He knew fully well now what going to a stranger's place meant and he didn't want to go through that again.

"Can'that wait?" The man asked. "You can talk to'm later."

"I don't know, I don't think he would like it if I went behind his back like that…" Goku said.

"'s fine. He doesn'hav'ta know if y'dun'tell 'm." The man argued. There's no telling how many drinks he had had, he wasn't using logic at all. Of *course* Vegeta would know.

All of a sudden the man, started hugging against him and trying to urge him to follow. "Come'on, I live right down the road. It'll only be for a lil'while."

As he said that, he tightened his grip on his butt.

"…I don't feel comfortable with this." *What's **wrong** with me? I'm a lot stronger than he is. I could **easily** fight him off if I tried, so why aren't I?*

*And why has my tail scar been so **sensitive** lately? I haven't felt this way in years…*

Goku spoke out several more times in hopes of getting him to leave him alone.

Unfortunately, the man refused to take no for an answer. At some point, he started becoming more forceful and aggressive.

"I'm sorry, I really don't have time for this. Maybe some other time?" His voice was weak.

He didn't actually have any intentions of actually doing ***anything*** with him, but he didn't want to make him angry. Lying and dismissing himself politely was the best option he could come up with.

Still, the man refused to stop. The physical contact was suffocating to Goku, he felt like he was about to collapse. Flashbacks ran through his head as he shut out his surroundings and, in that moment, Goku completely froze up, actually about to cave and go with him.

That's when a voice spoke up interrupting them.

"I believe he said he wasn't interested in you, human."

It was Beerus. He was eating a stick of Dango and had just approached them, soon followed by Whis and Vegeta.

"You bastard! Get your filthy hands off of him!" Vegeta made no hesitation to punch the man in the face, sending him crashing into several stands and causing them to collapse. "Kakarot is *mine* , you hear me?! *Nobody's* allowed to touch him, especially not some *scum* like *you* …!"

"Wait, did he just say *his* ? Are those two a couple or something?" Beerus quipped, watching them, as he stood back further towards Whis.

"Oh my, are you really just now figuring that out, My Lord?" Whis asked with a smile. "I thought it was pretty obvious they've been together for a while now. I've even seen them kiss a few times."

"Is that so…? Well, I knew they had gotten closer, but I didn't realize it was something romantic…" Beerus pondered it. "How fascinating…"

With that thought in mind, they turned their attention back to the two Saiyans.

"Wait, Vegeta!" Goku had just barely managed to pull Vegeta off of the man, whose face was busted in and bloody, hugging him from behind. "You've got to stop! Please… Don't do this…"

"Why *shouldn't* I?! That piece of shit was *harassing* you- If I hadn't stepped in when I did, then-"

Vegeta fumed when he saw the man get up and run off screaming, his shattered alcohol bottle left behind. "Coward! Get back here! ***I'll kill you!*** "

His mind was so fueled with rage that all he could see was red. The way the man had touched him was completely unforgivable in Vegeta's eyes.

Goku kept his hold on him, knowing if he let Vegeta go now, he would probably kill the man. "It's okay now…! Just let him go. He's not bothering me anymore…"

Vegeta reluctantly complied, but turned his gaze to the crowd that was watching it, glaring at them. "You **all *saw*** what that piece of shit was doing to him, how *uncomfortable* he was, yet not a single one of you thought to step in to stop him?! What's wrong with you people?!"

"Why's that *our* problem, huh? A true *man* should be able to defend *himself* …" Some guy suddenly sniggered.

"Yeah, how 'bout try teaching yer *boyfriend* to stand up for himself, then maybe that wouldn't have happened."

"You know what his problem is? He's *spineless* !"

"He almost went with him too! It's pretty obvious he wanted it. I bet he actually likes getting dicked in the ass, submissive faggot."

The voices went on, chuckling following. Most of them were teenagers, but, despite their age and immaturity, Vegeta was on the verge of killing every single one of them, his anger reaching its peak.

The final string holding Vegeta together snapped when somebody spouted out, "Go kill yourself, faggot."

That's where he lost it.

"That… *DOES IT!* " He let out a loud roar, allowing his energy to leak out around him. He almost entirely ignored Goku's words telling him not to kill them.

Screams were heard everywhere as he sent a ki blast into the ground, creating a small crater near some of their feet. It didn't hit anybody but it was enough to shake them with fear. "Get the hell out of my sight right now, or, so help me, I will ***END*** each and every single one of you!"

They immediately did as told, scurrying off in an instant.

Goku could feel his heart pounding in his chest, a wave of lightheadedness passing over him.

"Vegeta, I need to… sit down…" he strained to speak, gasping for air.

"Kakarot, what's wrong?" Vegeta immediately turned around, focusing his full attention back to his lover.

"Can't… breathe…" Goku trembled as he clutched at his chest, a dull pain shooting through it.

"It's alright, I've got you, I'm right here." Vegeta immediately felt all of his anger subside when Goku collapsed in his arms. Due to the odd position, he had to kneel down to the ground, to get a better hold on him. "I need you to try to breathe slower for me. Can you do that?"

Goku didn't respond. He *couldn't* .

Shit. I've got to do something. If he stays here, he's only going to become more overwhelmed.

"He's having another panic attack. I'm taking him somewhere else." He took out his card and offered it to Beerus and Whis. "Here, purchase whatever you want with this."

Whis grabbed it. "Vegeta, wait."

"What is it now?" Vegeta asked impatiently.

Whis waved his staff, and all of a sudden a bag of ice dropped into his hand, which he then tossed to Vegeta. "Take this with you."

Vegeta thanked him before lifting Goku in his arms and flying off.

"You know, I'm actually kind of surprised you spoke up for him a few minutes ago, My Lord." Whis said.

Beerus couldn't deny it, but had to play coy. "...Yeah, and so what if I *did* ? I just think some people should learn to keep their hands to themselves. It's *disgusting* ."

…

"Everything is going to be alright now, I'm bringing you somewhere quieter, okay? For now, I just need you to breathe." Vegeta spoke as softly as he could manage, holding Goku in his arms. Goku was now crying.

"...When… When he touched me, I just… I froze up again… like I always do and he…" he gasped.

Vegeta's eyes contorted with pain when he heard the words the other Saiyan was trying to say.

"It's okay… You're safe now..." He assured him, ignoring the world as it passed them by. "He can't hurt you anymore..."

After a few minutes, he found a nearby park away from the festival and flew down to a tree which he leaned Goku against.

Goku began again. "...When he started touching me, it was like it was happening to me all over again, and I couldn't… I couldn't move… It…"

"It took you off guard, I know. It's okay… Your reaction was *normal* … He had no business putting his hands on you like that." Vegeta said, reaching up and to move some of his hair out of his eyes.

"...The stuff they said about me, I…" Goku clawed into his wrist with frustration.

"What they said about you was *wrong* , Kakarot… Ignore them… Hey, stop that…" Vegeta had to grab Goku's hand to stop him from scratching himself. But, much to Vegeta's frustration, it seemed like Goku was intent on doing just what he wanted him not to. He moved around where he was facing Goku and could get a better grip on hand. He held it down tightly to his lap. "...Would you like to hold some of the ice that Whis gave us? That helped you last night, right?"

"Mn." Goku gave him no real response.

"Here, try it." Vegeta took out a few pieces and handed them to him.

He watched with some relief as Goku held them, finally seeming to calm down some.

After they had melted, Goku asked only one question.

"Can you… hold me?" He could only hope that Vegeta would be okay with it.

"Yeah, of course…" the Prince did so without hesitation, wrapping his arms around Goku's neck in a gentle embrace.

Goku felt himself melt in the warmth, slowly reaching up and hugging Vegeta's waist. The prince blushed slightly at that, but he didn't mind.

Another silence settled between them, Goku trying to gather his thoughts again, Vegeta giving him the time he needed.

"What should we do about the stands that got destroyed…? I'd feel kind of bad about it if we just left it like that." Goku said.

Honestly, Vegeta had no desire to mess with it, considering plenty of those stall keepers also saw what was going on and did *nothing* . But saying that wouldn't help the situation.

"Forget that, I'll pay them back later." Vegeta dismissed his worries, briefly looking up when he heard the sound of distant crackling. "Are you still interested in seeing the show?"

"Yeah, I guess so. But I don't really want to go back there right now… Not after what happened…" Goku mumbled.

"Then hold still." Vegeta said, with a tinge of mischief.

"Vegeta, what are you-?!" Goku's face turned red, startled when the other Saiyan picked him up bridal style yet again and flew into the sky. He eventually pouted. "You don't have to carry me, you know. I can still fly."

It wasn't that Vegeta hadn't carried him like this before, but this time was different.

"Stop whining, idiot. And focus on the stupid fireworks, already." Vegeta scolded him, stopping in mid air when they were close enough to the area to get a good view.

You don't have to carry me, you know. I can still fly.
Stop whining, idiot. And focus on the stupid fireworks, already.

The truth was he just wanted an excuse to hold Goku longer, but he couldn't say that out loud.

"..." Goku paused for a moment, still slightly bitter. Fortunately, he relaxed after a bit, deciding to just go along with it. Being in Vegeta's arms like this did feel kind of nice. He gave a small smile, before resting his head against his chest, the lights illuminating his eyes and face.

Vegeta observed him with a gentle expression.

Gods, why the hell is he so beautiful…?

"Can you see them okay?" He asked. "We can always go higher if you need me to."

"It's alright. You don't have to do that." Goku assured. "I can see them just fine. Hey, Vegeta…?"

"Hm…?"

"What's a faggot?" Goku then looked up at him with curious eyes, he looked slightly troubled. "That's what one of those guys called me, right…? I was wondering what it meant."

Vegeta's heart skipped a beat when the word left his mouth.

"That's… not a word you need to know…" His expression was painful as he spoke.

Damn them, he should have never been exposed to any of that.

"He said I was… submissive… that I wanted that guy to…" Goku lowered his head in shame.

"Who *cares* what he said? Whether… you are or not… it… isn't an excuse… to *do* that to somebody…" Vegeta buried his face in Goku's hair. "I'm sorry, Kakarot…"

"For what?" Goku asked.

"I *failed* you... I wasn't by your side when you *needed* me." Vegeta's voice cracked. "And not just that, but… our date was *ruined*.. . I… wanted this to be special… for just the two of us, but…"

"What are you talking about? This *is* special. Normally, you'd never suggest this sort of thing, so just knowing you went out of your way like this for me… It really means a lot." Goku smiled, reaching up and wrapping his arms around his shoulders. "Besides, you beat the crap out of that guy. If not for you, I…"

He didn't even need to finish the sentence.

"Still, that sick fuck *groped* you… I…" Vegeta argued back, his voice shaking.

"You couldn't have known that he would do that." Goku pointed out, not wanting him to blame himself.

"Maybe not, but… I wish I had killed that bastard when I had the chance…" Vegeta growled.

"It's alright. It would have caused us a lot of trouble if you *had* . Just… In the future, let's decide on something quieter, okay?" Goku said.

"...Oh? I'll bet you're thinking about a certain steakhouse, *aren't* you?" Vegeta practically read his mind, the corners of his lips curling upwards.

Getting his mind off of it probably was for the best.

"Maybe…" Goku hesitated, shyly running a finger across Vegeta's vest. "Their food *is* pretty good."

"Is that so? You really liked it *that* much, did you?" Vegeta's smirk widened.

"Yeah… I can't help it… Ya really won me over back then…" Goku admitted.

"Well, it looks like we'll have to go there pretty soon, after all, then, *won't* we…, Kakarot…?" Vegeta purred, before pressing his lips against Goku's, more than satisfied to receive another blush from him.

"Mn. Sounds… great…" Goku closed his eyes when the other man's tongue entered his mouth, bracing his hand against Vegeta's chest and clutching at the fabric.

…

By the time Whis and Beerus met back up with Vegeta, Goku had fallen asleep in his arms.

"You're still planning to stay here on Earth, correct?" Whis asked, after he had handed Vegeta back his card.

"Yeah, I'm going to see if Bulma can find him a doctor. One that could help him with these issues he's been having..." Vegeta said.

"Well, just be sure to keep us updated, will you? I want Goku back on his feet as soon as possible so I can spar with him again some time." Beerus said.

Vegeta's focus remained most on Goku's sleeping face. "That's what I was planning on."

Not for Beerus of course, but all the same.

"In any case, I think it's time we should be leaving, Whis." Beerus yawned, placing a hand on Whis's shoulder. "I'm in long due of a nap right about now."

"Yes, My Lord, as you wish." Whis said simply, before offering Vegeta a small smile. "Vegeta? If you could, let Goku know we said we hope he feels better, will you…?"

"Yeah…" Vegeta replied in a low voice.

Whis and Beerus took off only moments after, leaving Vegeta alone with the sleeping Saiyan.

…

"Therapy? Oh, so you finally decided to take me up on my offer, after all." Bulma smirked when she heard Vegeta's request.

"...I'd… rather not, but he needs medication... It's… the nightmares… They've been… getting worse and I think it has something to do with me since we're… together now… He could have *died* last night, Bulma… There was… blood *everywhere, it was all over him* , and all over *me* . *Please,* I need you… I can't do this alone anymore…" Vegeta was visibly shaking, and tears were forming in his eyes.

Bulma's eyes widened slightly at hearing that. She could tell he was putting every bit of his pride aside to do this. Getting up, she hugged him, careful not to wake up Goku, who was still in his arms. "Hey… It's alright… We're going to get him help… Listen, there's actually a place I have in mind. I'll call them first thing tomorrow morning and have them schedule an intake, okay?"

"Alright…" Vegeta said.

"That being said… This could take a while…" Bulma paused, not sure how to approach the subject. "So… Under… most circumstances… Like in the case of an employee self-harming or showing risks of suicide, I would usually suggest to have them admitted to a hospital for a psychiatric evaluation, but I'm not so sure Goku would respond very well to something like that, since he could easily leave if he wanted to."

"But why a hospital? What can *they* do? That's for physical wounds. This is different." Vegeta muttered.

"Well, not exactly…" Bulma corrected. "It's like this. When somebody is admitted to the ER for mental health reasons, they're put into a separate unit entirely where they won't have access to sharp objects or anything that would pose a threat to their safety. A therapist at some point would have a talk with him, and then decide where to go from there. If Goku was, say, deemed at a risk of hurting himself, he would eventually be transferred to another place, which would be a mental facility. There, they could get him on some medication, and even help him find other outlets to deal with stress."

"Then... how long would he be in there for?" Vegeta asked. He had no intentions of admitting him right now, but he wanted to consider all possible options in case things got out of hand.

"It all depends. Due to lack of beds, it can take up to several weeks before a facility can take in new patients, but when they're admitted, unless it's as a resident, I'd say it would be anywhere from a few days to a month or so. As long as Goku behaves himself and doesn't keep trying to harm himself, he likely wouldn't be in there any longer than a week or two."

Easier said than done.

"..." Vegeta faltered. "What about visitation, then? Could I… see him while he was there?"

"Well, yes, but visitation is limited, so you wouldn't be able to be with him all the time. Most facilities have it set up as either once a day or once a week. Phone calls are limited as well, but that has much more leeway, depending on the facility. In the adult units, people are usually allowed to use the phones whenever, but they'll cut them off during groups and at night."

"I see…" Some part of Vegeta felt like it was wrong to think about, considering how much Goku hated hospitals, but if they could get him on medication sooner, that would theoretically be for the best.

The problem was, as Bulma had mentioned, Goku could leave whenever he wanted. And not only that, but Goku was by no means weak, if he had another incident like last night, then Vegeta wasn't so sure they would be able to hold him off, even with sedatives. It was better he stay with somebody he trusted.

And not just that, but the idea of putting him under the constant surveillance of doctors who would likely have to watch Goku bathe or shower wasn't an idea that Vegeta took very kindly to. He highly doubted Goku would either.

Such a task was something Vegeta himself would be more than capable of handling.

"I can tell you're nervous and I understand why… If I'm being honest, this is probably something you'd do better to talk with Goku about and see what *he* thinks, because unless he's willing to cooperate, then I don't really think that would be a good option for him."

"I have to agree. Even so, I do know he needs constant surveillance right now regardless." Vegeta finally admitted. "And I can't provide that for him by myself. Do you think you could help me? Be with him when I can't, I mean… You're one of the only people I could trust with this."

"Yeah, sure, I guess I don't mind… But I do have a job, so you'll have to stay with him at night." Bulma said.

"I know, that's what I was planning on…" Vegeta swallowed. "And, as for now, I'm going to hold off on hospitalization… Hopefully, if we're lucky, then it won't have to come to that."

"Well, in any case, you should probably get him to bed for now… We'll have to catch up on everything some other time." Bulma told him.

"Yeah… I'll do that." Vegeta said simply, before thanking her and going back to his room to lay Goku down in the bed.

He went back to the bathroom, changing into a loose tank top and sweatpants.

He scoffed a bit when he remembered he was still wearing the necklace that Goku had put on him. Despite that, he didn't bother taking it off. He didn't have the heart to, just knowing that Goku had spent basically all the money he had on it.

Upon returning to the bed, he caressed the other Saiyan's cheek, laying down next to him as he observed his sleeping face.

If only things had gone differently today. Why I ever thought a festival was a good idea is beyond me…

At least he got to watch the fireworks with me, but still-

"Vegeta… What time is it…?" Goku's groggy voice suddenly interrupted Vegeta's thoughts. He was obviously still tired.

"It's past midnight…" Vegeta said. "Listen, I've talked to Bulma… She's going to schedule you to be seen by a doctor, although it may be a while, so we'll just have to wait things out for now."

"Kay." Goku murmured.

"Also-" All of a sudden, Vegeta felt Goku's fingers brush against his chest. He was playing with the pendant from the necklace he had given him.

"That necklace looks good on you. It matches with your eyes." Goku said with a loving gaze.

"Moron. We both have the same eye color." Vegeta said softly.

"Yeah, but there's something different about yours…" Goku murmured.

"Oh? And what would *that* be, Kakarot…?" Vegeta inquired.

"Dunno. I can't explain it." Goku replied shyly. "They're strange."

"Strange, huh?" Vegeta smirked. "Well, I would certainly hope you mean that in a good way…"

"I do…" Goku gazed up at him shyly. "I really like your eyes."

"I like yours too…" Vegeta brushed a thumb over his cheek. "They're kind. The opposite of mine."

"Yours can be kind too sometimes… A lot of times, in fact… Like the way you look when you hold Bulla… Or me… And when you smile… But also…" Goku felt his cheeks become warm as he looked down. "I really like it when you get serious too… and fight for the people you care about, or even when you get all competitive… I just… don't like it when you get angry at me, or sad, or when you worry about me… Cuz I don't always know how to deal with those things… You know… I've been told before… that I don't really understand people… or the way others think… And maybe they're right about me… But… it's not… that I don't understand *at all* … Just that… I have a hard time… knowing how to respond to certain things… Some people think… that I lack empathy cuz of that… That all I care about is fighting… But… martial arts… is the only way I really know how to connect with people…"

"Even so, that doesn't mean you lack empathy…" Vegeta traced his fingers across Goku's jawline down to his neck. "Your response is to internalize things even if it appears on the outside that you don't care sometimes… Me…? I do the opposite… I lash out at people and destroy things. If anything, *I'm* the one without empathy…"

"Hey, that's not true…" Goku argued weakly.

"Isn't it, though…?" Vegeta ruminated, a saddened expression. "I've killed people before… and wiped out *countless* civilizations in the blink of an eye. When I die, I'll be going straight to hell for all the things I've done… I've even *been* there before, so I would know..."

Half the people he had killed, he didn't even have any regrets about. It was more of a surprise that Goku could even love a person like him.

"Still… You're changing… You're not like you were back then…" Goku's ears turned red when he felt Vegeta's hand resting over his heart, which was racing a mile a minute.

"You're wrong. I *still* kill people… I'm not merciful like you are…" Vegeta argued.

"Yeah, but… you usually have reasons for that… Besides… there are also times I've seen it was necessary, like with Frieza… and others…" Goku said.

"All the same… There's nothing I could ever do… to atone for my sins… or the sins of our race. I have blood on my hands, Kakarot, more than you could even imagine. Like all the Namekians I killed back on Nemek. Those are things I can never take back. So compared to me… You're one of the most empathetic people I *know* … Or you wouldn't… keep sparing- enemies like how you spared *me* … And you wouldn't have forgiven me either. If anything, you're *too* empathetic."

"Heh. You really think that's really any better…?" Goku avoided his gaze.

"Well, it certainly beats all the crazy shit *I've* done." Vegeta replied with dry humor.

"Maybe, but… It almost seems like most of the people that have attacked Earth or hurt our friends were all connected to *me* somehow… Plus a whole lot of them ended up later becoming my allies. So I dunno… Doesn't that kinda make *me* a bad guy too?" Goku mused in a low voice.

"No, Kakarot, you're not a bad guy…" Vegeta said. "Just as I'm not a hero."

"I never really considered myself a hero either, though." Goku thought about it. "I'm just some dumb guy who likes fighting."

"Heh, I don't really know if *anybody* is truly a hero. We all have our own reasons for fighting." Vegeta said. "Especially us Saiyans."

"...Hey, Vegeta…?" Goku's eyes darted around, anywhere but at his partner. "Are you… really sure… you're okay with this? With me… not fighting, I mean… I expected you to get angry or something, or tell me I was a coward for it. I did quit, after all."

"And so did *I* for a while. After you died fighting Cell… That's why I'm in no place to judge you for that. I would be a fool to." Vegeta could sense that he was nervous. They *both* were, the close proximity was something that they had gotten fairly used to by now, but because of their pasts it made things awkward at times. "Besides, look at Bulma, she was never a fighter, either, yet I still fell in love with *her* ."

"...What happened… between you guys, anyways?" Goku wasn't sure if it was an appropriate question, but even Bulma hadn't given anybody many answers. "You never really… told me about it…"

"...We just… decided we were better off separated… Well, mainly me. But the decision was ultimately the same from both ends..." Vegeta explained, vaguely.

"Yeah, but didn't-you *loved* her, Vegeta, so *why* …?" Goku probed.

"It's… not important… Sometimes, people… They just don't work out, and that's alright." Vegeta said simply. "At the very least, it wasn't anything like what was going on between you and Chichi…"

"...It was… really hard with her sometimes… cuz I care so much about her, ya know? But… it's like… one minute she can be the nicest person ever and then the next… something will set her off and she starts… she starts *screaming out of nowhere* … And the things she says about me... I just… couldn't… deal with it…"

"You shouldn't have to. To be married with somebody who makes you feel bad about yourself… Sorta seems unfair to *you* , *doesn't* it?" Vegeta pointed out.

"Well, it's not like I can hate her or anything. She *is* a good cook." Goku smiled softly. "She's strong too, and she's always looked after Gohan and Goten when I wasn't around or able to. Plus…, she didn't… constantly put them in danger like I have… She's a way better parent than I've *ever* been."

"You're not *all* bad." Vegeta mumbled. " *I've* made a lot of mistakes too… With Trunks. It seems to run in the family... I wasn't particularly close with my father, either. I respected him as a warrior, of course… But looking back now, I realized he was wrong… about a lot of things… That's why… when we had Bulla… I decided… I didn't want to screw up again, like I did before. Or like how *he* had screwed up with me."

"Heh, I don't remember my parents… or their faces… My brother… he told me… that the reason I was sent here… was to kill all the people on Earth. But I dunno if that's true…" Goku ruminated.

"...You know… Raditz sometimes talked about your mother." Vegeta recalled.

"He did…? What was she like?" Goku asked, gazing at him with curious but tired eyes.

"...Her name was Gine... She was kind… but also stubborn… a little like you… But she wasn't really cut out as a fighter, so she became a butcher instead and worked at our meat factory…"

"Huh… Is that so…" Goku thought about it. "And what was *your* mom like…?"

Vegeta paused for a long moment, a small smile resting on his face. "She was a proud woman, and incredibly feisty too. Even my own Father couldn't handle her completely. If I'm being honest, she was probably the most terrifying woman I've ever known, even more terrifying than Bulma…"

"Scarier than Chichi too?" Goku asked.

"Definitely." Vegeta said.

"You know... It kinda reminds me of *you* sometimes, though… You're feisty too... That's something I really like about you." Goku said, and Vegeta couldn't help but get the feeling it was some strange attempt at flirting. But that's when Goku's expression became much more tender. "Especially when you get all passionate and start giving speeches about your pride… If not for you, I… I don't think I would have been able to accept where I came from, or being called Kakarot. I was ashamed of it… knowing the things our people did… And then finding out what happened to my grandfather…"

Tears started working their way to his eyes again.

"You have nothing to be ashamed of…" Vegeta once again gently wiped them away when they fell, before tracing some fingers along his cheek. "The sins of our race… The only person here that bears any responsibility for that is me. You're innocent, Kakarot. So you shouldn't be made to feel bad about being a Saiyan just because of what others have done. You're not like them, or me. You're different. And about what happened to your grandfather too… you couldn't have known… So please… try not to beat yourself up about that so much..."

"...He's… the closest thing that I ever had to a parent growing up and I was so young when he died… Maybe that's why… I don't really know how to be a good father, not like how Chichi wants

me to be, anyway… I guess I just wasn't cut out for it… Cuz… there's still so many things I'm learning, even now..." Goku said.

"There's a lot of things *I'm* still learning too… It just takes time." Vegeta said.

"Still… You do really good with Bulla." Goku offered.

"Well, I try my best… but I don't think I'll ever be perfect." Vegeta mumbled.

" *None* of us are. We've all made mistakes. Just trying our best… that's really all we *can* do… Just like you're trying your best with me." Goku said. "Yet all I've been doing is making things difficult for you."

"You're trying your best too. I can tell…" Vegeta wrapped his arm around Goku's waist, pulling him closer to kiss him.

Goku closed his eyes, returning it. "...I love you."

"I love you too…" Vegeta said, in a low voice.

He still found it somewhat awkward to say, but he knew that Goku needed to hear it.

Goku's chest burned in response, before he embraced Vegeta's neck, "I'm gonna go back to sleep now… kay…?"

"You do that… Just let me know if you need anything..." Vegeta said.

They were in an awkward position but neither one of them cared.

Goku uttered a small sound akin to a confirmation, eventually dozing off.

It would be another night without sleep, but Vegeta could deal with that.

…

Some time later, Vegeta found himself absentmindedly scrolling through his phone out of boredom.

He didn't use his phone often, but it sure as hell beat doing nothing.

It wasn't long before he was dragged into watching random videos and other stuff out of sheer boredom, even occasionally scrolling through more articles on how to deal with a situation like Goku was going through.

At some point, around 4 am to be exact, he felt Goku shift on the bed beside him, draping a hand over his chest. Actually, before this, he had been moving around quite frequently, but, this time, Vegeta heard him sniffling.

He was crying in his sleep. Vegeta turned on his side, rubbing his hand across Goku's head and brushing the tears away in hopes that it would calm him down. Unfortunately, despite his attempts, Goku eventually woke up in a panic anyway.

When he saw Vegeta's hand, he jolted slightly, pulling in on himself, stifled sobs escaping his lips.

"Kakarot, it's just me… I'm not going to hurt you…" Vegeta soothed, pulling his hand away. "Another nightmare, was it?'

"It was… again…" For a long time, Goku looked like he wanted to say something more. In the end, however, no words came out. All he could do was helplessly cling to Vegeta.

"It's alright… you don't have to say…" Vegeta gently played with his hair, pecking the top of his head.

"Vegeta…? Do you… really think meds could help me…?" Goku said after a long time, looking up at him like his answer meant everything.

"Well, I do believe…" Vegeta hesitated, knowing fully well there were no guarantees. "that we at least have to *try* ."

"But what if they *don't* …?" Goku asked. "What if they make everything worse…?"

"Then we stop them immediately and have you put on something new. You can't allow yourself to lose hope just because one medication makes you feel a certain way… Trial and error."

"...Mn…" Goku curled up in his arms. "Well… I just… hope you're right about this…"

Not much was said after that and slowly, he drifted back off again, leaving Vegeta to once again watch after him.

...

Hope somebody enjoyed this. Would be happy to hear y'all's thoughts, but please be kind. :)

Moving Forward (Part 2)

Fun fact: Japanese Vegeta can sing, so that's one of my headcanons for this story, that he usually just chooses not to. :)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qY7CcxQLUBM or search up Vegeta's cooking hell and go to 2:04 in.

He has such a pretty voice. :')

Trigger warnings remain the same for this one. Except for more homophobia, because again people are assholes, and I wanted to vent based on homophobia I've seen in my own family based on religion. (Not that I'm against religion myself, just against the extremists out there, so yeah.)

...

The next day, Vegeta found himself training in the gravity chamber, as he always did when he needed to let off steam or just to stay in shape. The room was currently set to two hundred times gravity and he had worked up a sweat, some minor injuries here and there covering his body.

Goku watched him with some level of excitement. Vegeta's movements were always so graceful when he was training alone, swerving in and out of the way of the lasers with ease, even taking the attacks head on at times.

And so nimble. The exact opposite of how he was during battle, where he was always tense and uptight. It was when he trained by himself that Vegeta truly let loose. Even though it was practically intangible - because Vegeta would never spar with him that way - it was still a sight that Goku had come to love watching.

But there was one constant Goku found himself thinking whether Vegeta was training by himself *or* fighting an opponent.

"Man, Vegeta's so awesome..."

He couldn't keep his eyes *off* of him.

His face flushed in embarrassment when the other Saiyan's gaze suddenly met his.

Vegeta looked away almost immediately, but secretly took some pride in the fact that Goku was watching him with such adoration.

…

After a long time, Vegeta turned off the artificial gravity and training bots, approaching Goku with a smirk and folded arms. "You sure like to stare at me a lot, don't you, Kakarot? Did you really think I wouldn't notice?"

"Ah, sorry…" Goku had to lower his head, sheepishly scratching the back of his head. "It's…"

Vegeta sat down in front of him, bracing a hand on the floor as he leaned in and cupped Goku's chin. "May I…?"

Goku nodded, blushing.

Vegeta then pulled Goku's face towards his, pressing their lips together.

He trailed off when Vegeta traced his thumb down his cheek.

A moment of silence settled between them, before Vegeta observed him with an intense, but fond, expression. "...You're cute when you blush, you know that…?"

Another kiss.

"You're blushing, too..." Goku pointed out, suddenly feeling weak in the knees.

Vegeta *made* him weak.

"And so what if I am…? All of that's *your* fault." Vegeta muttered.

And another.

"My fault…? How is it *my* fault…? *You're* the one who started this, Vegeta. *You* finish it." Goku retorted.

"Fine then. I *will* ." Vegeta huffed slightly. "But don't say I didn't warn you…"

He almost immediately pinned him to the wall in a kissing match. His sweat drenched body was pressed against Goku's, both of their faces quickly becoming red from the heat of the battle in each other's mouths.

Vegeta for the most part was winning, but Goku wasn't complaining. It was a satisfying feeling for both of them, Vegeta being the more assertive one and Goku letting the smaller Saiyan have his way with him. It somehow just felt right to them.

At some point, Goku pulled back, out of breath.

"Wait, Vegeta… we shouldn't… be doing this here." He said, bashfully, arms wrapped around him and fingers running through his hair. "What if somebody sees us?"

The truth was he actually liked how passionate the other man was getting. He was just shy - And Vegeta knew this.

"Let them." He told him bluntly as he turned his focus to Goku's cheek, traveling down to his neck. "We're just kissing…"

The only reason he was actually brazen enough to say that was because nobody *was* watching.

"Mn… still… Shouldn't this sort of thing be done in private…?" Goku mumbled.

"We *are* in private…" Vegeta pointed out, before smirking. "But alright. If you insist. Let's go back to our room and continue where we left off, shall we?"

"Okay." Goku said.

Vegeta started to lean in towards him one more time, but was stopped by the door opening.

"Um, Mr. Vegeta, sir…" It was one of the staff. A woman in her mid twenties to be exact.

"What do you want? Can't you see we're busy?" Irritated by the interruption, he glanced over his shoulder, glaring at her.

Goku looked away, flustered at being seen like this.

"I'm sorry, it's Ms. Bulma. She's having an issue with Bulla." The woman said, visibly uncomfortable at noticing the position the two Saiyans were in.

"With Bulla? What's wrong?" Vegeta quickly became concerned, but he didn't move from his spot.

"Well, she has a fever, so she won't stop crying. Ms. Bulma said she wants to see you."

"...Tell her I'll be there in a minute." Vegeta said before the woman excused herself. When the door was closed again, he let out a sigh, running fingers through the soft strands of Goku's hair. "I'm sorry, it looks like we'll have to finish this later, then…"

"It's fine." Goku said understandingly. "Your baby's important too, right?"

"Yeah…" Vegeta swallowed, staring into his eyes for what seemed like an eternity until finally he claimed his lips one last time - softly - before urging Goku to come with him.

…

Bulla's face was pink from the flush due to the fever and her breathing was erratic amongst her crying. When Vegeta entered the room, Bulma had never been more relieved to see him.

"There you are." She was elated. "Do you mind looking after Bulla for a while? I need to run to the pharmacy and grab some more medication. Nothing I've given her has worked so far. At the very least, you might be able to get her to relax some until I get back."

"...Yeah, sure…" Vegeta gently took Bulla into his arms.

"Keep an eye on her temperature." Bulma instructed, leaving a thermometer on the shelf. "If it gets any higher than 104, then she'll have to go to the hospital."

With that said, Bulma exited the room, leaving Vegeta and Goku alone with the crying baby.

Vegeta sat down on the floor near the crib. Goku seemed uncertain what to say, wanting to give him space to deal with his daughter. But he did sit down next to him.

Vegeta started rocking her in his arms in hopes it would distract her from the pain. But unfortunately for him, none of his usual methods seemed to be working.

"You wouldn't happen to have any ideas on how to stop a baby from crying, would you?" Vegeta asked, giving in enough to ask him for help. He knew fully well that if Bulla kept crying, it would only make her fever worse.

"Well, when I was little, my grandpa used to sing to me sometimes. He wasn't very good at it, but it did help me relax some when I had headaches." Goku said.

"Sing…? You can't be serious right now…" Vegeta trailed off. "No, I *won't*... "

"Why not?" Goku tilted his head. "Nobody else will hear you outside of me and Bulla." Goku rationalized.

"That is *not* the *issue* here…" Vegeta muttered, his face burning red. "It's… *embarrassing* ."

"Well, if it helps you feel any better, I honestly can't sing worth a darn, so I'm sure you'll do just fine." Goku laughed a bit. "Come on, do it for me. I really wanna hear you sing."

Vegeta's eyes widened for a moment when he heard that part, a conflicted expression forming on his face. He gnawed at the inside of his cheek with apprehension.

It's only Kakarot… And Bulla… Nobody else…

"...Damn it- *Fine* , but you had better not tell a single *soul* about this, you hear?" Vegeta's gaze was more intense than Goku had ever seen before.

"I won't." Goku grinned.

Vegeta drew in a deep breath, slowly calming his nerves. After a long silence, he started to sing.

Except this would be far different from the time at Bulma's birthday party. Much softer. The tune was similar to that of a lullaby, gentle and relaxing. Goku's heart melted at the sound.

The words, meanwhile, were in another language, one that Goku somehow instinctively recognized even if he didn't understand the words of it.

This song… It must be Saiyan…

I wonder what it means.

Before he realized what was even happening, tears welled up in his eyes. He clasped a hand over his mouth to stifle his sobs.

Why am I crying…? I feel like I've heard this before. But where…?

Vegeta gazed back up at Goku, letting his singing come to an immediate halt when he realized he was crying.

"Hey, what's wrong?" He asked, worriedly.

"I don't know… I just started crying all of a sudden…" Goku desperately tried his best to wipe away the tears in his eyes. "Your voice is so pretty. I didn't know you could sing like that…"

"I can, but I usually prefer not to..." Vegeta replied vaguely, looking away with a downcast look on his face.

"Hey, it looks like singing did the trick, though. She stopped crying." Goku pointed out, even though his voice cracked.

"You're right…" Vegeta seemed surprised when he saw that Bulla had closed her eyes. "Get the thermometer. I'm going to check her temperature."

Sniffling, Goku got up and did as asked, handing him the device.

Vegeta placed it in her ear, measuring it.

When it beeped, it read 102. He then placed it back down beside him and continued to hold Bulla in his arms. At some point, he could feel his own eyelids becoming heavy. He really needed to sleep soon, but he couldn't until Bulma came back. Not just because of his baby but because of Goku too.

For a while, neither one of the Saiyans said much of anything. Vegeta continued to check Bulla's temperature, absentmindedly keeping his eye on Goku, who had started playing around with his Rubik's cube out of boredom. If there was one thing Vegeta had learned about Goku, it was that he was surprisingly dedicated when it came to solving puzzles. He wasn't particularly fast, but when he actually started one, he refused to put it down until it was completed.

Goku's eyebrows were furrowed as he continued to twist the thing around.

He looks so focused.

Vegeta could tell that he was obviously becoming frustrated, but at the very least he appeared to be enjoying the challenge. He found the sight somewhat intriguing to watch.

Eventually, Bulma returned with medication.

"Thanks for watching her for me." Bulma said, lifting Bulla out of his arms when he stood up.

"Yeah, it's no problem…" Vegeta replied. "Oh, by the way… Did you ever call them? About Kakarot, I mean. The doctor."

He didn't want to rush her, he knew that she had a lot going on, but he did find it important.

Goku paused at hearing his name mentioned.

"Yeah, I called them this morning." Bulma said. "They've scheduled him for an intake on the 17th."

She then moved closer towards him and lowered her voice. "But also… They said that if there's any kind of emergency in the meantime, they recommended he should still be brought to a hospital."

"I see… Thanks. Kakarot-" Vegeta looked over at Goku, who looked distressed. He had only heard bits and pieces of what she had said, but he did recognize the word hospital.

"I don't *wanna* go to a hospital…" Goku said, interrupting him.

"Calm down. We're not sending you to one." Vegeta said.

"You're… not? Then what were you guys talking about?" Goku asked. "I know it had to do with me. I'm not stupid."

"It's-" Vegeta didn't even know how to broach this.

"Listen, Goku." Bulma decided to take the initiative on this one to explain it to him. "When people are… dealing the same things you've been going through, like urges to hurt themselves, they're often sent to a… place where they can get help…, from doctors who understand their issues and are able to put them on medication. People who could even help them find other outlets to channel out their feelings. It was only a suggestion, but nobody is making you go. Okay…?"

"...Mn." Goku still didn't seem too happy, but he didn't argue against it any further.

…

Vegeta and Bulma exchanged a few more words with each other before Vegeta decided he needed to sleep.

"I'm starting to get tired. I think I should probably go and rest for a while. As for you…" He looked over at Goku. "I want you to stay with Bulma until I get some sleep. You'll be fine, won't you?"

Even though some part of Goku didn't want Vegeta to leave his side right now, he didn't want to argue or break Vegeta's trust, so he decided to do as told. "...Yeah…"

Yet he was clearly insecure.

In that moment, Vegeta placed a hand on Goku's head and kneeled in front of him so they were at eye level again.

"Look, all I want right now is for you to be safe… This isn't anything personal. You know that, right?" Vegeta needed to know that he understood that he wasn't abandoning him.

"Mhm." Goku offered a small nod.

"Bulma… Are you really sure you don't… mind?" Vegeta asked, somewhat hesitantly. "Letting him stay with you, I mean…?"

"Of course not." Bulma smiled, although she was somewhat preoccupied by her baby. "It's not like this is the first time, after all. He practically *lived* with me when he was a little boy."

"You hear that? You'll be just fine. Now behave yourself, alright?" Vegeta instructed sternly, but his tone was affectionate.

Goku was quiet for a moment, but he nodded once more.

Vegeta then turned to Bulma but remained in the position.

"If he starts scratching himself, try having him hold ice. It should help ground him." He instructed, brushing some of Goku's bangs out of his eyes. "And he likes puzzles too, so if he gets anxious, then find something challenging to distract him with. I'm sure you have stuff around."

Goku didn't know what to think as he listened to Vegeta's instructions to Bulma. He didn't even really register what her response was, but his primary concern was Vegeta leaving his side. He had

somewhat tuned out what he and Bulma were saying until:

"I'm going to bed now. I'll see you later." Vegeta said, awkwardly kissing him on the cheek. Normally, he'd never do something like that in front of others, but he knew that Goku needed it as some sort of reassurance.

"Yeah, later…" Goku watched as Vegeta left the room. All of sudden, Bulma's voice interrupted his thoughts.

"So tell me, Goku… What's it like being with that prince of yours?" She joked, smirking.

"My prince…?" Goku considered the words on his tongue, not entirely sure what to think of saying that in such a context.

"Well, that is what he calls himself, isn't it?" Bulma pointed out. "The prince of all Saiyans. So that would make him your prince as well."

"Yeah, but calling him that feels weird. It'd be like if he suddenly started calling me 'Goku' or something. Then again, he did stick me with some stupid nickname right after we got together…"

"A nickname, huh?" Bulma's eyes narrowed, a mischievous grin resting on her face, making it obvious she wanted all the details he would offer.

"Just… promise me you won't tell anybody." Goku said.

"I won't." Bulma said, but the tone in her voice suggested otherwise. "But what's this nickname he gave you?"

"It's… Carrot Cake." Goku's voice suddenly became lower than usual. "He said my mouth tasted like carrots when we first… kissed."

Bulma immediately burst out laughing. "Wait, are you serious? Vegeta actually *called* you that? That's so *unlike* him."

"Would you stop laughing at me?" Goku pouted. "He only calls me that to mess with me."

"Well, in all fairness, your Saiyan name does sound a lot like *carrot* ." Bulma pointed out, wiping some tears from her eyes that were from laughing too hard. "Maybe you should give *him* a nickname too, to get even with him."

"Like what?" Goku pondered it.

"I'm not sure, but nicknames will come naturally. I'm sure you'll think of something eventually." Bulma said. "Still… You never answered my question."

Goku's face turned red but he smiled, yet there was a tent of sadness in his eyes as he spoke.

"I… really like being with him. He makes me so... happy… but… I sometimes… wonder if… maybe he would be better off with somebody else…" He looked away.

"What? Goku, you can't actually believe that…" Bulma seemed a bit upset by his confession.

"I keep causing trouble for him…" Goku curled in on himself, clutching tightly at his upper arms. "He didn't even get to sleep the past couple nights because of me."

"Now hold on. Vegeta made that choice himself because he wants you to take care of yourself." Bulma had just put Bulla back in her crib, before walking over and sitting down in front of Goku.

"Yeah, but what's the point if all I do is drag him down with me?" Goku averted his gaze.

"Well," Bulma said, nudging his shoulder. "try to imagine what *you* would do in *his* situation."

"Me…?" Goku found it hard to imagine Vegeta ever resorting to such a coping mechanism, but if he *had* , then... "I'd… want to do everything I could for him… to help him feel better…. The idea of him hurting himself like I have would really scare me…"

"So *in* this theoretical situation, would you think *he* was a burden for needing someone to help *him* …?" Bulma challenged.

"No, of *course* not… I…" Goku paused. "I just wouldn't… always know *how* to help..."

Bulma smiled in response. "Then there you have your answer."

Only then did Goku start to realize her point.

…

Goku had an issue with touching things too much. Bulma made it a point to tell him to stay away from her equipment. Of course that didn't stop him.

Goku continuously asked questions, constantly peeking over her shoulder out of some minor curiosity as she tinkered with the machinery, even if he didn't understand anything about it. So it shouldn't have been a surprise when he accidentally broke one of her propellers.

It was easily replaceable, but that didn't make it any less irritating.

"What's this button do?"

Bulma looked up at some point, panicked when she saw him near one of her recent projects. "Don't touch that!"

It was at this point that she knew Goku had to be kept distracted. If only her father were here, then he could at least keep him occupied.

"Okay, look, Goku. I get you're anxious, but I can't have you destroying my stuff." Bulma laid her foot down, voicing her frustration.

"I'm sorry, Bulma. I didn't know…" Goku said, lowering his head. He couldn't help but feel bad.

"It's alright, I just want you to be aware." Bulma sighed a bit, before reaching into her desk and grabbing a couple cat toys, one that was a laser pen and the other including a stick that had a ball connected to a string. She handed them to Goku. "Here. My father's out right now, so why don't you go over there and play with Scratch for a while? He looks lonely."

"Okay." Goku took the toys and did as told, walking off to fool around with the cat for a while.

He absentmindedly pointed the laser at some of the walls to get Scratch to chase it around, which he did so for a while, but cats are finicky so it wasn't long before he lost interest in it.

After that, Goku was left to his own devices again. Bulma didn't want to be bothered right now, so his only choice was to try to be patient.

Easier said than done.

He tried to distract himself with the Rubik's cube, but that only managed to keep his attention for so long.

The memories once again began to invade his mind. It was like he was reliving that day all over again, consumed by the feeling of ***that man*** on top of him; holding him down. .

And that's when he saw it - A broken glass shard, lying underneath some strange machine.

Goku didn't even think twice before moving towards it and picking it up.

"Goku, what are you doing down there? I can get you a chair and desk if you'd like, that way you won't have to crawl around on the floor anymore." Bulma suddenly offered, catching him off guard.

She didn't seem to notice the shard.

"Oh, uh… Sure." Goku said, nervously.

Bulma smiled. "Come with me. There's some in the room down the hall."

…

"...By the way, Vegeta said you like puzzles, right?" Bulma later asked after she had found him a small fold up desk and chair, which he was seated in. "I think I have a 500 piece one in my desk if you're interested. It might be kind of boring, but-"

"That's fine…" Goku cut her off, surprising her.

"You want it?" She asked.

Goku nodded, secretly fidgeting with the glass shard.

"Alright. Just give me a second, I've got to find it first." Bulma said, fumbling through her drawers, before finally locating it. It had the picture of a dog on it. "Ah, there it is. Here, this should help keep you occupied, right?"

"Yeah. Thanks, Bulma…" Goku murmured.

"It's no problem, but, listen..." Bulma could sense that he wasn't feeling too well. He seemed wound up. "If you happen to start having any kind of bad thoughts, then I want you to let me know, okay?"

Another nod.

People told him that a lot, and Goku responded how they wanted him to. Said what they wanted him to. But did that mean he would actually ask them for help when he got upset? Probably not.

Still, maybe the puzzle would help, after all, he rationalized, so he was willing to try.

Bulma smiled fondly as Goku took the box from her, sitting it down on the desk and spilling out the pieces.

The urges were still there of course, but somehow, he was able to force himself to redirect his focus to what was in front of him for now, slipping the glass shard into his obi.

He told himself he would save it for later.

…

Over the next four hours, Bulma occasionally had to go back to check on Bulla to feed her and make sure her fever had went down, before eventually taking Goku with her to the cafeteria to eat. Goku told her he wasn't hungry, so she didn't press it. Vegeta hadn't mentioned the stuff about Goku's disordered eating to her, most likely because he had been too exhausted to think of it.

…

That night, Goku was about half way done when he felt a hand on his shoulder.

"Oh, working on a puzzle, are you?"

Goku looked over to see that Vegeta was standing beside him, gazing over his shoulder with some interest. He had the smell of shampoo coming from him. Clearly he had just taken a shower, but the odor was nice.

"Yeah, Bulma gave it to me." Goku said, as Vegeta watched him fill in the spaces.

"Here, try piecing the edges together first. It's a trick I learned some years ago. It should help you." Vegeta picked up a puzzle piece, placing it into the correct spot.

"You think? I guess I can try." Goku was initially upset because he wanted to solve the puzzle by himself, but he let it slide. With Vegeta's assistance, he started searching around in the pile for all the remaining edge pieces he could find, slowly filling them in one after the other.

"Woah, you were right, Vegeta. This *is* a lot easier." Goku noted.

"See? I told you." Vegeta smirked.

The two then slowly solved it together, Bulma even joining in a few times here and there.

Once they were finished, Goku put the puzzle back into the box, thanking Bulma for letting him use it.

"Alright, now that that's taken care of, I think it's time you go and take a bath." Vegeta said.

"Okay…" Goku grinned as he was led out of the room by Vegeta. "Bye, Bulma."

Bulma held up a hand as they left, but she was primarily distracted.

"Have you had dinner yet?" Vegeta asked, looking up at Goku.

"No, not really, I wasn't hungry at the time." Goku said.

"I see… I haven't eaten since earlier so we'll probably have to go down to the kitchen later…" Vegeta replied.

Goku highly doubted he could stomach anything at all right now, but didn't mention it.

…

Vegeta then had Goku pick out some clothes that he could change into after bathing.

Neither one of them were particularly looking forward to this so they didn't say much. Goku was afraid for obvious reasons and Vegeta couldn't help but feel queasy about this. Even if he knew that it was the only way. Even if he fully understood it.

"You do… remember what I told you before, right…?" He lightly brushed a hand against Goku's arm as he entered. Even bringing it back up caused a pit to form in his stomach, apprehension and discomfort obvious in his tone. "I'm… coming in with you…"

"I know…" Goku knew he had no place arguing or complaining about this.

Despite that, when he actually went to undress, he had to stop almost immediately. But it wasn't because he was embarrassed, it was because only then did he remember the glass shard he had picked up and put into his obi earlier. How was he supposed to hide it? Vegeta would want to wash his clothes after this, and bringing the shard into the bathtub with him was out of the question because Vegeta would see that too. So basically he would see it either way.

"Hey, uh, can we uh… maybe do this later?" Goku asked.

"No we may not… You know how long clothes take to wash and dry. Besides, I'm not getting into bed with you smelling like Bulma's lab." Vegeta hadn't intended that as an insult towards Bulma, of course, but her laboratory had a distinct odor to it that came from the usage of chemicals, and different kinds of metals. It was practically unavoidable.

The fact was he didn't want to be reminded of his ex wife while he was kissing Goku, such a scent would make that impossible.

"Yeah, but…" Goku trailed off.

"But what…?" Vegeta briefly glanced away. "I'm not going to get any weird ideas from seeing you naked if that's what you're worried about."

"That's… not…" Goku was unable to explain himself.

That's when Vegeta noticed the way he was clutching at his obi.

"Hold on, are you hiding something…?" He recognized that face.

"No…" Goku denied.

"Liar." Vegeta said, slightly hurt. "Come on, show me. I promise I won't yell at you this time..."

"You won't…?" Goku asked, with some distrust.

"No… I won't..." Vegeta approached him.

After a long moment, Goku finally reached into his obi and held out the shard, allowing his head to bow in shame.

When Vegeta saw the glass shard, his eyebrows contorted slightly but he couldn't allow his emotions to show too much. He grabbed it. "Where did you find this?"

"It was under one of Bulma's machines." Goku said. "She didn't know."

"What the hell was that woman doing *?"* Could have been a thought he might have had, but it was quickly gone, because he knew fully well that Bulma was a busy woman. She couldn't keep her eye on him every single second. Still, at the very least she did need to keep her lab cleaner so there wouldn't be a chance of broken glass laying around so freely But that was a topic for tomorrow.

"...I see... I'll throw this away later." Vegeta placed a hand on his shoulder as a means of reassurance. "We can discuss all of this with her some other time. For now, I just want you to focus on taking a shower."

"Okay…" Goku said.

Despite Vegeta dropping it, this brought his mind back to his other concern as he played around with his obi.

Just knowing they were in a relationship now caused him to feel an extra sense of vulnerability at the thought of being naked in front of him again.

Vegeta was somebody who he was supposed to be intimate with, somebody he was supposed to be able to trust. Vegeta had even said he wouldn't do anything weird to him. But trust could be taken away in a single instant.

Still, he had to undress, he knew this. He had no other choice. Saying he didn't want to bathe again wouldn't fly.

Feeling Vegeta's gaze on him, he swallowed, finally undoing his obi and slowly working his clothes off. Once he had stripped, he had never felt more exposed in his life than he did in that moment.

Vegeta had seated himself on the stool next to the bathtub, crossing his arms and legs. He tried to keep his gaze from wandering, but it was almost impossible when he saw the marks on Goku's legs. They were *everywhere* .

His beautiful body, covered in scars. And so many of them…

*Why? He doesn't **deserve** this.*

After a few minutes of preparing the water, Goku stepped inside. He first started off by scrubbing his legs after that, but with the silence in the room, the negative thoughts started to take hold of him all over again. Because he had held back earlier, the urges were twice as strong now. Even questions about what medication would do to him. Questions if he was eventually going to have to see that man again. And other things ran through his head. Vegeta had taken away his shard, so he was left to use the only thing he had at his disposal. The rag.

He repeated the same process over and over, harshly rubbing it into his skin until it had become red.

At some point, Vegeta started to realize what he was doing.

He was trying to create a burn mark, just like he had done on the evening of the assault and dozens of other times as well.

"Kakarot, hey… Let's not do that." Vegeta rushed over to his side and grabbed his hand to stop him, knowing that if he didn't, it was guaranteed to escalate. Tightening his grip on both his hand and on the rag, he slowly worked his other arm around Goku's neck, leaning against him in an embrace. He couldn't care less that he was wet or naked. "...Do you need to talk…?"

Goku was tense at the contact at first, mainly because of the fact that his body was exposed, but he soon sniffled, shaking his head.

"Then do you want me to keep holding you…? I thought it might help ground you." Vegeta didn't want to risk making him uncomfortable.

After a long moment of hesitation, Goku nodded.

Vegeta's eyes softened at seeing that. "Alright, just let me know when you need me to stop."

Goku closed his eyes, trying his best to focus on Vegeta's warmth to distract himself from the storm inside his head. *It's just Vegeta* , he told himself, the person he loved and trusted. Not ***that man*** .

This was okay.

Slowly, he found himself relaxing as he focused on one thing only. His partner. The sound of Vegeta's breathing. His warmth. His heart beat. His scent. How safe and secure he felt in his arms.

No longer was he worried about anything else. Vegeta's embrace *often* seemed to have that effect on him.

"I think I'm… feeling better now…" Goku finally said. "Thanks… For stopping me…"

Vegeta pulled back. "Don't mention it…"

Some part of Goku almost wanted to ask him to hug him longer but he couldn't say that, he didn't want to make things any more awkward between them than they already were.

"Hey…" Vegeta started working the rag out of Goku's grip. "Do you… mind if I wash your back…?"

Even though suggesting such a thing had Vegeta's face burning up out of embarrassment and his voice was weak, he still didn't feel too comfortable with leaving Goku with the rag just yet.

Goku was a bit startled at first by the suggestion, but didn't say too much, offering a low response. "Alright…"

Upon receiving a confirmation, Vegeta moved in closer and grabbed a bottle of body wash, squeezing it out onto the cloth.

He mixed it into the fabric and began scrubbing Goku's back.

Goku was suddenly a bit tense, but this wasn't the first time Vegeta had washed him, so he wanted to trust him.

Everything went smoothly until the other man accidently brushed the rag across his tail scar.

Goku hissed at the contact, reflexively gripping at Vegeta's shoulder in response. His face was red, as if he had had some sort of visceral reaction to it.

Goku had never looked more vulnerable. It was something Vegeta couldn't possibly bring himself to tread on.

"I'm sorry." He apologized instantaneously. "I didn't mean to hurt you."

"I don't get why it's so sensitive all of a sudden… It was like this yesterday too… When that guy touched me…" Naturally, there was a slight difference in how he felt about it this time, solely because it was Vegeta who had touched it, but he still found it inconvenient.

"Saiyan tails can be strange like that, even after being cut off. Still, it's… probably nothing… So try not to worry about it too much. I'm going to wash your hair now, alright?" Vegeta softly kissed him behind his ear.

"'kay…" The gesture caused Goku's heart to leap.

Upon receiving permission, Vegeta then squirted some shampoo into his hands, mixed it with some water and began lathering it into Goku's hair, allowing the strands to become slick.

Goku closed his eyes, enjoying the sensations of Vegeta's fingertips gliding across his scalp. He quickly found himself lost in the pleasure.

Vegeta blushed a bit when he saw the tranquil expression on Goku's face. He looked like he was about to fall asleep. Obviously he was doing something right for him to be so relaxed.

He briefly ran his hands under the water and grabbed another rag. "I need you to tilt your head back."

Goku did as asked, allowing Vegeta to place the rag over his eyes. Vegeta then filled up a cup under the faucet, slowly pouring the water over Goku's head.

He repeated the process multiple times, the warm liquid trickling down to Goku's neck and rinsing his scalp until Vegeta was certain all the strands were soaked and thoroughly free of suds.

After that, Vegeta reached for a towel and proceeded to dry Goku's hair with it.

"There, that should be clean now. I'll let you take care of the rest." Vegeta said.

"Thanks." Goku mumbled shyly.

"Yeah, whatever..." Vegeta briefly placed a hand on his head before moving back to the same spot as before.

Goku finished the rest of his bath rather quickly after that, making sure to give his legs and the other parts of his body a good scrub - but not too hard, before taking a moment to rinse off under the shower and unplugged the drain.

Vegeta handed him the same towel from before, awkwardly glancing away. "Here. Dry yourself off."

Goku did so, ruffling his hair with it in the process as be stepped out.

"You're getting water all over the floor. At least stand on the bath mat." Vegeta scolded him.

"Oops. Sorry." Goku laughed nervously.

"Idiot…" Vegeta watched as Goku began to pick up the clothes. He then folded the towel over the shower curtain rod.

In the meantime, Goku finished up and pulled on his pajamas. He had to use another pair of arm bands because he didn't want the chance of anybody else seeing his scars.

"Alright, I'm done." He followed Vegeta out of the bathroom with his gi in hand.

"Good. Come with me, we're bringing your gi to the laundry room and then we're going to eat." Vegeta said.

Yes, Goku still chose to wear a gi. Even if he wasn't fighting currently, it was something important to him. No other outfit could compare.

Goku followed after him and did as instructed. Vegeta watched as Goku put his clothes into the washer. He then dumped in some detergent and set up the washing machine, noticing Goku couldn't figure it out.

Once they were done, the two headed to the dining hall. Vegeta had them fix him up with a plate containing the same thing Bulma had had earlier. Goku declined what they had offered. Again.

Some of the staff members were staring at them. Vegeta noticed it but sent them a death glare in return, causing them to look away. Goku, on the other hand, was another matter. He liked to pretend such things didn't bother him, but it did. And the worst thing was he *recognized* that look, it was the same way some of the people at the festival had looked at him. After the incident with that guy.

Did they know? Or was this about something different? Something he wasn't aware of?

He didn't know what he had done to upset them so much, but whatever it was must have been bad. It made him feel insecure and reminded him all over again of the things he wanted to forget.

"Here, I had them make you some vegetable soup. Do you think you could handle this?" Vegeta held out a styrofoam soup bowl with a plastic spoon. In his other hand he had his own tray of food.

Goku's response was too low for him to make out, but he took the bowl anyway.

"I think we have some protein shakes in the other kitchen. Let's go there." Vegeta pressed a hand against his back to urge him to come with him.

The staff members had to look away from Goku at that point, they were too afraid of Vegeta to cause any trouble with him around.

After making their way to the private kitchen, Vegeta led Goku to the fridge, pointing out the protein shakes. "I want you to pick out one of these. We have chocolate, strawberry, and vanilla… Which one sounds best to you?"

Goku didn't respond.

"Kakarot." Vegeta spoke back up.

"Oh, uh…" Goku paused for a moment. "I like strawberry…"

"Strawberry, it is. Here." Vegeta handed one to him, before grabbing himself a can of coffee and closing the door.

Goku followed Vegeta to one of the tables, but he wouldn't touch his food, even after Vegeta had started eating his own.

Vegeta finished his off fairly quickly, throwing it away after he was done. He still hadn't finished his coffee, but was more focused on Goku.

"What's the matter?" He observed. "You're being quiet again."

"I-It's nothing. Don't worry about it. I'm just feeling a little tired is all." Goku lied with an awkward laugh.

In the end, Vegeta didn't push it. "You haven't touched your soup…"

"I'm not hungry…" Came the usual response. But his body was trembling, so he definitely *was* hungry.

"...You know you've got to get *something* on your stomach or you'll just collapse again…" Vegeta took the bowl from him, opening the lid and setting it aside. He then scooped up some of the soup with the spoon, and held it up to Goku's mouth. Goku vehemently turned his head away, avoiding it with a wimper.

"Come on, Kakarot… Do it for me…?" Vegeta urged painfully, moving it towards him again.

Fortunately, Goku obeyed this time, taking it into his mouth. For some reason or another, it seemed like the "for me" often did the trick.

Slowly, he chewed the bits up and swallowed, before accepting another spoonful. And another.

"That's it. You're doing good." Vegeta praised him, smiling softly.

With hesitation, Goku ate about half of the bowl, finally looking down and deciding he had had enough.

"Think you can drink some of your shake now…?" Vegeta picked up the bottle and shook it up, opening it up for him. Not because Goku couldn't, but because he *wouldn't* .

After a moment, Goku accepted it from him and began drinking it, slowly.

In the meantime, Vegeta took several more sips of his coffee.

Goku watched, curiously. "How do you even drink that stuff…?"

"What, you mean coffee?" Vegeta shrugged. "It's fine to me. The caffeine helps keep me awake."

"I tried it a long time ago, but I thought it tasted bitter." Goku mumbled.

"Most likely what you had was black coffee, not all of it's like that." Vegeta said.

"You mean there are different types of coffee?" Goku asked.

"Well, it mainly just depends on how it's made." Vegeta explained. "If you flavor it with creamer, it can actually be quite sweet. By itself, it's more of an acquired taste."

"Huh…" Goku wasn't sure how to respond.

After a while, Goku handed the bottle to him. "Alright, I'm done."

"Oh, you drank all of it. That's good." Vegeta tossed it into the trash can that was behind him, before closing Goku's soup bowl. "We'll save the rest of your soup for tomorrow, that way you can warm it back up and eat it then. Does that sound alright with you?"

Goku gave a small nod.

"I'll go put it in the fridge." Vegeta got up, leaving Goku to himself. He returned a moment later, finishing off his coffee before throwing it away. "Come with me. We need to move your clothes over to the dryer."

Wordlessly, Goku got up and followed him.

…

After finishing, Goku and Vegeta found themselves walking down the hall to hear the sound of a TV blasting. It was coming from one of their living rooms. As it turned out, Trunks was playing a video game.

"Don't you have school tomorrow?" Vegeta asked, upon coming into the room.

"Yeah, but I need to finish this level first." Trunks said.

"What are you even playing?" Vegeta wanted to know.

"It's Spyro 3." Trunks answered, slightly distracted as his father approached him. "I've been stuck on Mushroom Speedway for the past hour now. I already completed the Time Attack part but they want me to race the butterflies as well so I can get an egg, but I can't get above second place."

"Here. Let me try." Vegeta offered.

"Uh sure, okay." Trunks was a bit surprised, but handed him the controller.

Vegeta sat down next to him, letting him give him a basic rundown of the rules.

Unsurprisingly, of course, he ended up failing almost immediately. He got to the third ring before being knocked off course when he went through the star.

And it happened multiple times.

"Geez, you really suck at this, Dad." Trunks mocked.

Okay, that one struck a nerve. Yesterday, he had been mocking Goku for not being able to do a candy cutting game, but now his son was lecturing him for not being able to get a stupid flying dragon through a ring course?

"Shut up. I'll get it eventually. I just need some practice." He growled, blushing when Goku snickered at his pleight.

For a long time, nobody said anything. Vegeta was primarily distracted because he kept losing. He was becoming frustrated quickly and it was obvious.

"Little shit, think you'll get in front of me, will you? Well, I'll show you!" Vegeta growled at the screen. He intended to flame the butterfly but he accidentally pressed the wrong button, which led to him sinking. "Damn it, how the hell do these people actually expect you to *beat* this? This is ridiculous!"

"Well, uh, I'm gonna go to bed now… Goodnight, dad." Trunks got up, nervously, knowing fully well that when his dad got angry over a video game, there was no pulling him away from it until he succeeded. He just hoped he didn't get it in his mind to break or blow up the PlayStation instead.

Vegeta uttered something along the lines of a go ahead, but still wasn't all there.

After Trunks left, Goku moved over closer, laying his head on Vegeta's lap, using it as a pillow.

Vegeta adjusted his arms somewhat but otherwise didn't mind.

Slowly, he was finally starting to get a hang of the controls. He was actually in third place now unlike the other times that he had failed in 5th or 4th place.

"I love you." Goku knew those words came out of his mouth a lot, but he couldn't help it. He really liked saying that to him.

"Yeah, I love you too." Vegeta was too preoccupied by rounding a corner to headed towards a star to truly focus on what he had just said.

Goku felt a fuzzy warmth enter his chest as he wrapped his arms around him and hugged closer.

It took a while, but Vegeta finally ended up in first place.

The options showed up once more with retry or quit.

He wasn't sure if he was supposed to press quit, but didn't some of these games have an autosave function?

When he pressed quit, it showed a depiction of a dragonfly named Sparx talking to Spyro.

"Wow, you've won first prize!"

An egg appeared on the screen with the name John and cracked, a baby dragon popping out of it.

Trunks mentioned something about an egg. Was this it? Probably… I'll just leave it as it is.

Once the egg and baby Dragon were gone, Vegeta decided to switch out of the game to another one.

"Hey, let's play this game." He said. "Here take a controller."

"The racing one?" Goku sat up, accepting the one Vegeta handed to him. "Last I checked, you were terrible at games like that. Besides, you barely got through the Spyro one just now."

"Heh, just you wait, Kakarot. I've practiced this one since we last played."

…

Vegeta *had* , in fact, practiced.

But what good was that when he still continued to let his emotions dictate his actions in the game?

He was more focused on pushing Goku off the road instead of actually completing the course and driving properly. But what was especially worth noting was his speed.

"I refuse to let you beat me at this!" Vegeta shouted, crashing into Goku. "Hahaha!"

And sure, he actually did manage to get ahead. Except, right after, he found himself unable to stop himself from running into a giant boulder.

Goku didn't even hesitate to call him out for it.

"Vegeta, I told you before you need to slow down on your turns!" Goku scolded. "That's why you keep crashing."

"Dammit!" Vegeta cursed, holding his controller in a death grip.

He had already lost too much time to catch up which was why Goku ended up winning yet *again* .

Vegeta barely held back his frustration as Goku crossed the finish line, victorious once again. He had practiced this game time and time again, and yet he still couldn't seem to beat Kakarot at it. It was humiliating.

"Hey, I'm kinda getting bored of this. Can we play something else or watch some TV or something?" Goku asked, a bit awkward.

"Fine…" Vegeta begrudgingly caved, putting their controllers on the charging docks. He picked up the remote, randomly started flipping through the channels until he came across some sitcom,

which he decided to leave it at.

Goku soon laid back down, once again resting his head on Vegeta's legs.

Vegeta absentmindedly played with Goku's hair and watched with fondness as the other Saiyan slowly dozed off. At some point, he got up, carrying Goku back to the bedroom after retrieving his clothes from the laundry room(Yes, somehow he managed both, just barely.) He then laid the other man down and covered him with blankets, soon joining him in bed.

After that, he just laid there, keeping Goku in his arms. Much to his relief, this night ended up being one of those rare nights that Goku didn't wake up crying from a nightmare.

…

The following week went about the same.

During the day, Goku would stay with Bulma in her lab and, at night and in the mornings, Vegeta would watch over him and even bathe him sometimes.

Goku had been nervous at first about the change, but slowly he got used to the routine.

Vegeta never touched him strangely or did anything that made him uncomfortable. Even when bathing him, he was gentle about it and respected his boundaries as much as he possibly could. Goku liked that.

Vegeta had had a talk with Bulma about the glass shard Goku had found, after which she began to make an extra effort to verify that there weren't any sharp objects freely lying around the house or in her lab.

…

Vegeta and Bulma had both been actively encouraging Goku to explore various different coping mechanisms.

Some worked, some didn't.

Such as writing on himself with a red marker, which actually seemed to make the temptation to see real blood worse.

He did sometimes like slapping his wrist with a rubber band, which helped curb the urges to a certain level.

Occasionally, he'd do more puzzles or draw some, anything to keep himself occupied.

Not that he felt it could really benefit him since he still couldn't do the things he actually enjoyed right now due to the overwhelming fear of the memories that seemed to consume him every time he fought.

Vegeta had started carrying cups of ice with him into the bathroom in case Goku had a panic attack.

Sometimes, Bulma would have him take a walk with her outside. She knew he needed the extra support and her father, now also having some idea of the situation, took over to fill in in her absence when he got upset, or even watching over Goku himself when he or Bulma needed to use the bathroom.

It was a lot but, together, they managed.

Goku's aversion to food, however, was a different matter entirely.

There were nights that Goku would forcefully throw up everything he had eaten, with Vegeta helpless to watch and listen to. Other times, he wouldn't eat anything at all. Although it was subtle, he could tell just by lifting him at times that Goku was starting to loose weight.

Vegeta knew he was being selfish, but he couldn't stand watching him wither away like this. At the same time, he didn't want to come off as if he were forcing him to do *anything* , because he did understand the logic of what Whis had said, that Goku's self-harm - and indirectly his disordered eating as well - were his way of gaining control when he felt like everything else was *out* of control.

After all, the food wasn't just making him sick. He was actually *afraid* of it, a physiological manifestation of his trauma. That's why his appetite fluctuated. That's why, sometimes, he could eat with no problem, like at the festival, while, other times, he'd either starve himself, eat just enough to survive, or purge the things he *did* eat.

And some part of Vegeta understood it, from the vague bits of what Goku himself had said. He had had a man's dick shoved down his throat against his will to the point he had thrown up multiple times. He wanted control over what went into his mouth, control he hadn't had over his own body when it was aroused by that man fingering him. He was *hurting* , so badly so that he'd hurt himself even *more* just to get the false sense that the mental pain he was feeling was out matched by the physical one. That he was winning the battle, because *he* was the one who decided what caused him pain.

Vegeta tried to ask Bulma for advice, but all she could really do was point him to different treatment facilities and tell him that it would be up to a therapist to discuss those things with him.

However, she did get the chefs in the cafeteria to continue making a variety of different types of soup and protein shakes for Goku, so he wasn't consuming the same thing constantly. Even though it wasn't a lot, it was a better alternative to him starving entirely. It helped.

All *anybody* could really do was just work with him to the best of their abilities, because it was up to Goku himself to make that decision.

…

On the 16th, Goku was greeted by two women and Fran.

As it turned out the other two other women were his prosecutor and her assistant, who introduced themselves as Sarla and Harl. They tried their best to familiarize themselves with him by asking a bit into his personal life, his living situation, his family, and even how he had been doing since the assault.

They asked about his hobbies and seemed especially interested in hearing that he was a martial artist, telling him they'd have to watch one of his sparring matches with Vegeta some time, if he decided he'd like to go back to it at some point, but he wasn't sure if they were actually being serious or not.

"We want you to know that he *is* in jail." Sarla eventually said.

"So he's been arrested, then?" Vegeta asked.

"Yes, he was arrested a month ago." Sarla gave a confirmation.

Vegeta felt a wave of relief pass over him upon hearing that.

"Actually… Do any of you recognize this woman?" Sarla pulled up a picture on her phone of a younger lady who appeared to be unconscious in a bed, showing it to them.

"No, I don't think so. Who is that?" Goku asked.

"That's what we've been trying to figure out. We think it's highly likely she's another one of his victims…" Sarla explained.

There were bits of the conversation Goku tuned out after that upon realizing that his rapist had likely targeted others as well. His mind went blank until Bulma spoke up.

"And what about the trial?" She asked. "Is there going to be one, or do you know yet?"

"As things stand, we're hoping he'll go with a plea deal so we can avoid that route. But we're not sure yet. He could still refuse."

"Trial…? So I… might have to see him again, after all?" Goku couldn't bring himself to feel any sort of comfort knowing this. Multiple questions were already running through his head.

Vegeta looked over at him, placing a hand on his shoulder.

Much to his dismay, Goku pulled away from him. He heard the prosecutor say something, but he ignored her, getting up and pacing around a bit.

Sarla and Harl decided to leave after that, not wanting to overwhelm him any further. It was clear he wasn't handling this well.

Some part of Goku had already figured this was coming, but hearing it said out loud brought back all the fears he had been trying to push to the back of his mind for months.

I don't want to see his face again.

Goku bit his hand, trying to ease his nerves. But it wasn't enough, so he started rubbing at his arm instead.

"Kakarot." Vegeta moved towards him once more, but this time with caution, not wanting to scare him.

"I don't want to see his face again." Goku spoke his previous thoughts out loud.

"I know…" Vegeta murmured.

"There's still so many gaps in my memories… What if I screw up and forget something? They'll probably try to say that I consented…" Goku rubbed at his arm, desperately.

"Kakarot-" Vegeta repeated his name.

"What if he tries to start something with me? Or says something? Maybe my memory isn't good enough…? Or the videos… All of this could end up being for nothing. What am I even doing…?" Without even realizing it, Goku had already started tearing into his skin. Before this, he'd told himself he'd stop but it seemed like every time his feelings got to be too much, he ended up relapsing all over again.

"Kakarot-Babe, you've got to calm down. You're overwhelming yourself. Why don't we focus on one thing at a time?" Vegeta was too concerned and focused on Goku's mental state to really think about the fact that he had used a pet name towards him in front of Bulma. At the same time it came out sounding surprisingly natural so it was barely worth mentioning. "Is it okay if I hold your hand?"

"No…" Goku's voice cracked, as blood had started forming on his nails.

His tone felt like a knife to Vegeta, but he knew it wasn't personal. And yet…

"I understand that you don't want to be touched right now, but we can't let you hurt yourself…" He said. "So what do you want to do…? Do you want one of your fidgets? A marker? Ice? What…?"

"We could even take a walk or do a puzzle…" Bulma quipped. "Or you could draw again."

"Ice is fine…" Goku mumbled, popping a rubber band that he had against his wrist.

"I have a cup of ice on my desk, I'll go get it for you..." Bulma ran off for a moment only to return with a white styrofoam cup of ice.

She and Vegeta watched as Goku took out a few pieces and squeezed them between his hands.

"Feeling any better?" Bulma asked, after a bit.

"Yeah, I guess…" Goku looked down a bit, still seeming somewhat troubled. "...Mn… Actually, Vegeta…? I need to go pee…"

A small blush rested on his face as he said that.

Vegeta's eyes widened a bit, but found it slightly amusing. "Alright, come on…"

…

When Goku was done, Vegeta led him back to his room to give him some time to cool down a bit.

"I'm sure this is hard for you," He eventually spoke. "But if you need to talk about anything, I'm here."

"...I just… I don't want to see his face again..." Goku had said that earlier as well, yet Vegeta understood his need to repeat it.

"I'll come with you." Vegeta offered. "That way if he tries anything, I'll be sure to knock his teeth in."

Goku laughed a bit. "I'm pretty sure you'd get in trouble if you did that. It's like.. contempt of court or something."

"I don't care about that. I'd *gladly* get arrested just to have the satisfaction of beating the shit out of the bastard who did that to you..." Vegeta mumbled, before smirking. "Hmph, not that they'd have anything on *me* , of course. I'd easily break out."

Goku's smile soon faded. "I can't… help but be nervous about this. I mean… What if I screw up and forget stuff? Even now there are still many things I can't remember. I can't stand this…"

"You'll do fine. I'm sure of it… Just try to remain calm and tell them what you *do* know. Nobody's expecting you to remember *everything* ." Vegeta took Goku's hand into his own in hopes that it would ground him.

Goku relaxed somewhat after that, even though he was clearly still anxious. "...If I were different, then none of this would have happened in the first place… I keep… messing up and…"

"Shh, hey, don't say that…," Vegeta lightly scolded. "This sort of thing could have happened to anybody. It's happened to me too, remember…? You're not alone…"

"He implied… that he had been with somebody else before… some girl… who he said… loved sex, but… she couldn't… orgasm." Goku said in a low voice. "I thought… considering what happened to me, it might have been the same situation, but… Maybe I did and I just… don't remember it…"

"Kakarot, I… look... regardless of how your body reacted, it doesn't mean you enjoyed it…, or that you wanted it. When you're… in a situation like that… The body… It does what it wants to. That isn't always… something you can decide, or control… Do you get what I'm saying…?"

"...Vegeta…? When you were… raped… Did you…?" Goku's voice was weak. He didn't want to upset him.

"Orgasm…? Yes… I did…" Vegeta confirmed with a sense of vulnerability as he did so. "Multiple times, in fact… That's why… You shouldn't… blame yourself… because it isn't your fault."

Slowly, Vegeta traced his thumb across the scratch marks from earlier. The touch caused Goku to turn his head away, feeling exposed, as he knew the other Saiyan's gaze was locked onto the marks. Vegeta placed a kiss behind his ear. "Tell me, is there… anything I can do for you? To make this easier…?"

"...Can you… just hold me for a while?" Goku adjusted his position so he could bury his hand against Vegeta's chest.

"Yeah, of course…" Vegeta rested a hand on his back, rubbing it softly.

"I feel like you deserve somebody better than me…" Goku mumbled, causing Vegeta to pause for a moment. "Somebody who can-"

"Kakarot, no, look at me… Look into my *eyes* ." Vegeta moved around and gently cupped his cheeks, lifting his face with a loving yet stern expression. "From the very moment I agreed to be with you, I agreed to take on *all* of you. That includes all of *this* as well. Because I didn't just want you as a *warrior* , I wanted you as a *person* ."

"Still…" Goku swallowed. "Don't you… want somebody who could actually function like a *normal person* ? Somebody… who doesn't have all these issues that I do? Maybe… one who could even have sex with you?"

"No, I don't *care* if you're not normal. All I want right now is for you to ignore those blasted voices in your head already…" Vegeta objected. "The only one you should be listening to right now is *mine* , and what has *my* voice told you, huh...?"

"That I'm… perfect to you… Every part of me is." Goku's voice cracked.

"That's right… and nothing is going to change that, you hear me…?" Vegeta affirmed, gazing down a bit. "Look, I'm not always… good at expressing how I feel about some things, but… You *do* … have a place with me… You know that, right…?"

Goku was speechless at first, but after a moment he gave a small nod.

"Yeah…" He uttered, barely above a whisper as he laid against his chest once more. "Thanks… Vegeta... I wish I could pay you back somehow..."

Vegeta smiled, closed his eyes. "You don't need to owe me anything..."

"...Hey… Vegeta…?" Goku's tone was uneven, as he spoke up again after a while.

"What is it…?" Vegeta inquired.

"Can you… sing to me…? The song that you sang before…" Goku sounded nervous. He didn't know if Vegeta would agree to it, yet it had been so beautiful. Just one more time, he wanted to hear it again.

Vegeta was speechless for a moment. It was the last thing he had expected him to say. He wasn't sure how to even respond.

"Please? For me? Just one song, I won't ask for anything else…" Goku added, looking at him with gentle eyes.

"...You really want me to that much…?" Vegeta asked, an uneasy feeling in his chest.

Goku nodded.

"...Okay… But only for you…" Vegeta said.

After a long moment, he sang again.

Goku closed his eyes, visibly relaxing at hearing the familiar melody once more. It almost sounded sad in a way, and lonely. Even so, Goku tried not to think too hard about it, entranced by the sweet sound of his lover's voice.

When Vegeta was done, he kissed Goku once more, sheepishly meeting his gaze. There was a tinge of self-doubt in his expression. "How was that…?"

"Mn… I really like it when you sing…" Goku said. "It calms me down…"

"It does…?" Vegeta found that hard to believe.

"Yeah. A whole lot, actually…" Goku admitted.

"I see…" Vegeta replied shyly. "Then… In that case… I guess I wouldn't mind… doing it more often… if you really need me to…"

…

Goku had always hated doctor's offices almost as much as he hated hospitals. So when he stood before the clinic on the 17th, he was less than thrilled at first. That was until Bulma led him and Vegeta inside the building. The lobby was comfortable, with plush couches and a large television screen in the corner of the wall that showed a nature documentary in progress.

The office environment was quiet and there were no strange smells or noises.

Slowly, he started to feel a bit less nervous.

"I want you two to stay here, I'll be back in a moment." Bulma told Goku and Vegeta, before she walked over to the receptionist, who was sitting at her desk behind a window.

Goku sat down a few chairs over from an elderly lady who was watching the TV. Vegeta sat down next to him. Neither one of them had said much to each other for a while now and they couldn't bring themselves to start. About fifteen minutes later, Bulma came back over.

"Okay, everything's done on my end. I'm going to be covering the cost of Goku's appointments since he doesn't have any kind of insurance. Would you mind filling this out for him?" She handed Vegeta a clipboard with some papers and a pen.

"Yeah, sure." He took them. Everybody knew Goku didn't like messing with paperwork if he could help it and some of the things on it he probably wouldn't be able to understand anyways.

"...Anyways, do you want me to leave you here or should I just wait?" Bulma asked. She was well aware that Goku and Vegeta could fly and Goku had his instant transmission, but she decided to offer anyway.

Vegeta waved a hand slightly. "Go on. We'll be fine, I actually know this area."

"Alright then, I'll see you later." Bulma replied. "Good luck in there, Goku."

Goku averted his gaze slightly. "Thanks, Bulma."

Bulma smiled sweetly at him before making her leave.

When she left, Vegeta began filling out the address and name information, before looking at the birthday. "You wouldn't happen to know your birthday by any chance, would you?"

"Not really…" Goku sounded guilty. "Sorry, is that bad?"

With the mix of being sent to earth as a small baby and his amnesia, it was no surprise that Goku didn't remember.

"No, it's fine. Hold on, I actually think I recall Raditz mentioning it once. What day was it again…? In Earth time, it was…" Vegeta thought for a moment. "April… 18th… Age 737. You're 42. How much do you weigh?"

The extra time spent in the Hyperbolic Time Chamber would overcomplicate things so he didn't even want to mess with that.

"136 pounds, last I checked…"

That all but confirmed Vegeta's suspicions. Goku was usually somewhere in the 150-160 pound range. Still, he didn't comment on it. "And you're 5 '9', right?"

"Five nine what?" Goku tilted his head, a bit confused.

"Your height." Vegeta clarified.

"Oh, uh… that's… Five feet and… nine inches, yeah." Goku took a moment to respond. "What's *your* height, Vegeta?"

"I'm… 5 '5'." Vegeta answered, somewhat hesitant.

"Yeah, that makes sense. I did notice you seemed kind of short." Goku grinned with a giggle. *Not as short as Krillin, though.*

"Hey! I am *not short*... !" Vegeta retorted defensively. There was a tinge of insecurity in his voice as he continued with a small blush. "Besides, even if I *were* , why does it *matter* how tall I am…? There are more important things than somebody's physical characteristics…"

"I know, but still… If I'm being honest, I actually think it's kind of cute." Goku smiled, noticing that he seemed to be sulking.

"Oh, so you just wanted to mess with me, is *that* it?" Vegeta's face turned even redder upon hearing that. He pointed a finger at him. "Well, just remember that in comparison to a lot of people in this universe, you're *also* short, Kakarot."

"Hehe, well I guess you got me there." Goku admitted, with a sheepish grin. "Piccolo is way taller than us."

Vegeta was quiet for a moment at realizing that Goku didn't seem to care much about his own height. Vegeta tried not to, but it did still bother him from time to time.

"Tch. Whatever." He averted his gaze to the forms once more. "Let's just get back to answering these questions, idiot..."

He then moved onto marital status, checking it off as divorced. "Do you have any drug allergies?"

"I don't… think so… Minus whatever that guy gave me." Goku said.

"Those aren't really allergies, though." Vegeta corrected him. "He doped you up on muscle relaxers and likely other stuff. I'll just put that as a no for now."

That's when the questionnaire started asking about previous medical history.

Asthma, Diabetes, Osteoarthritis, Rheumatoid Arthritis… What even are all these…? To be honest, I highly doubt he'd know either.

The next questions started asking about sex related stuff. Vegeta felt a pit rising in his chest, worried that they would be touchy.

"They want to know… Has there… been a decrease in your level of sexual desire or interest?" He had a feeling about what his answer would be but, he forced himself to ask anyways.

"...Maybe? I'm not really sure how to answer that." Goku struggled to find the right way to explain it. "Because of what happened, I'd say yes, but then again, my feelings on sex just… change a lot. They always have, even before all of this stuff."

"How so?" Vegeta asked, wanting to understand him better in case this topic came up at a later point as well.

"Well, it's like this… has there… ever been some kind of food that you might like okay sometimes but then not care it for at all other times? That's kind of like how sex is for me. I'd usually rather just train or… Sorry, using food as an example might have not been a way to explain it, uh..." Goku grew a bit flustered.

"It's fine, I understand… Heh, using food as an analogy is actually pretty creative." Vegeta reassured him. "I'm the same way, but for me it's more about the physical contact than sex itself. It just feels… suffocating to me sometimes."

"I think Chichi mentioned something about it a long time ago. She said my sex drive was… low somehow. She wasn't mad at me or anything, but… apparently it's not… normal? I don't know." Goku said, drumming his fingers against the chair between his legs.

"What, you mean your libido? Kakarot…, you know it's… okay… to not care about that stuff all the time, right…? That doesn't mean there's anything wrong with you." Even though Vegeta *did* experience sexual attraction, his sex drive itself wasn't all that high either, at least not as high as Bulma's had been. Maybe it had something to do with the fact that they were Saiyans, he wasn't sure. But, in the end, it wasn't something he cared to think about much. It was what it was.

"Mn." Goku uttered in response, not saying anything further.

At first, Vegeta was uncertain how to proceed but he could tell this topic was upsetting to Goku, so he decided to avoid asking any more questions on that.

"In the past month, did you ever think that you would be better off dead or wish you were dead?"

That would be an obvious yes.

"Have you ever deliberately cut, burned, or injured yourself?"

Another yes.

"Hey, I didn't know you were left handed." Goku noted out of nowhere with some fascination.

"I thought you would have noticed it by now." Vegeta was a bit confused by his interest. Even Bulma had seemed somewhat intrigued at finding out. Was it really that uncommon?

"Yeah, well, I don't really see you writing often and I never paid much attention before." Goku admitted. "I'm right handed myself. But you probably already knew that."

"I did." Vegeta said, simply, holding up his left hand and creating a bit of a weak fist. "Most Saiyans… were actually ambidextrous, so I had to spend extra time training my right hand to make up for it. That way, I wouldn't be at a disadvantage when I was in combat."

There was a solemn expression on his face as he said that, like he was remembering something.

"What's ambi…de…?" Goku tested it. The word sounded so big to him.

"Ambidextrous." Vegeta repeated. "It means you can use both hands equally."

"Ohhh. That makes sense." Goku mused. "By the way, that reminds me. During some of our sparring matches, I've noticed you seem to hold your left arm a lot and it's always the same spot too. Did you… by chance ever get hurt there or something?"

"...Yeah, it was… Frieza. A long time ago, he… did something to it, and it never… completely healed after that." Vegeta explained with apprehension. Had it really been that obvious? Apparently so. "So when I'm in battle, the old injury occasionally acts up again."

"I see... That's… I'm sorry that happened to you..." Goku mumbled.

"Yeah, well, it's not important… I try not to focus on it." Truthfully, Vegeta did often wonder if fate was laughing at him with the number of times his left arm had been knocked out of commission by enemies, but his past with Frieza wasn't something he liked reflecting on, so he was quick to dismiss the subject. "In the past two weeks, have you been less interested in or less able to enjoy the things you used to enjoy most of the time?"

"Maybe? I… dunno how to answer that…" Goku almost wanted to ask Vegeta what exactly Frieza had done to him. However, upon hearing the question Vegeta had just read aloud, his focus was completely diverted and he became anxious.

"It's like… I still wanna fight and all, but… because of what happened… It…" Goku trailed off, unable to finish that sentence.

"I understand." Vegeta already knew what he was getting at and had no intentions of pressing it. "What about sleep? Any trouble falling asleep or staying asleep?"

From what he could tell, he did just fine sleeping, but that was still something only Goku himself would truly be able to answer. He had only been truly observing his for sleep for about seventeen nights, that wasn't really enough to say a lot.

"Yeah, sometimes." Goku said. "It's usually when I wake up from the nightmares, I often have trouble getting back to sleep after that."

One by one, Vegeta had him answer each question to the best of his ability without pressuring him to talk about things he wasn't comfortable with, but neither one of them knew how to answer everything, so it was impossible to complete the form in its entirety, but it was better than nothing. "They need your signature. Here, do you mind signing this?"

"Okay." Goku took the pen, doing as asked. "Man, your handwriting is so neat compared to mine..."

"It's not anything *that* spectacular, is it…?" Vegeta scoffed.

"That's not true, I actually really like it." Goku said.

"...Thanks, I guess… Stay here, I'm going to bring this over to the woman behind that desk." Vegeta got up, heading over to the window and handing the woman the clipboard and pen.

She thanked him and told him it would be a bit.

Vegeta returned to his seat, sitting back down next to Goku.

For a long time, neither one of them said anything.

…

A man named Kali did Goku's intake.

Kali seemed fairly nice, but Goku felt like he was being patronized the whole time for some reason and didn't particularly like it, but he knew he needed to press through it for Vegeta.

"So can I ask what brings you in today?"

With the encouragement of knowing Vegeta was there with him, Goku finally answered. "...Well, a few months ago, I was… raped. I've been.. having a really hard time dealing with it…"

…

A lot of the questions Kali had for Goku were questions that Vegeta had already asked him to fill out the papers with, alongside many other things about his medical history that he had no knowledge about, as well as stuff about his family situation, his stressors, and some minor details about the rape.

It went on about an hour before Kali was finally done with most of his assessment.

"Aside from medication, what exactly do you hope to get out of these services?"

"Learning… how to process this, I guess… There's so many things I don't understand… about what happened… And things… I can't even remember. I'm afraid to talk about it…"

From that point on, Kali explained what the treatment options were, went through Goku's goal plans and other things before saying that he would have the receptionist schedule Goku an appointment to see a psychiatrist sometime in the next few weeks and that therapy could be talked

about eventually as well if he needed it, although their current priorities were getting him on medication first.

Goku thanked him, leaving the room with Vegeta, who hadn't said much the whole time but had been listening. This had been Goku's appointment, after all.

The two headed to the lobby and walked back up to the desk.

"Do you have a preference for morning or afternoon?"

"Af-" Goku was about to speak but Vegeta cut him off.

"Morning, if possible." Vegeta said.

"There's a slot open on the 28th at 9:30am. Will that work?" The receptionist offered.

"That's fine." Vegeta affirmed.

The receptionist then wrote up an appointment card and handed it to him.

"I'll hold on to this." Vegeta glanced over at Goku and led him out the door. "Left up to you, we both know you'll just lose it."

Goku couldn't even deny it, he *had* lost their senzu beans before.

He followed him out the door, sticking to his side like glue. "Hey, Vegeta, are you going back home or…?"

"Let's walk around a bit." Vegeta urged him to follow.

"Okay." Goku replied as they walked along the sidewalk.

This area was right in the middle of town so there was a shopping center close by and a lot of other places. At some point, they came across a vending machine containing drinks that was at the end of a street corner. The machine had the option to use a card.

"Want a drink?" Vegeta offered.

"I guess I am sort of thirsty." Goku admitted.

"Pick one." Vegeta told him.

"That one is fine." Goku pointed out a red sports drink.

Vegeta pressed some buttons and it wasn't long before the sports drink and a can of coffee popped out.

He handed Goku his, opening his own.

"Thanks." When Goku started drinking his, he realized he was much thirstier than he originally thought he was. He ended up gulping down over half the bottle in one go.

"Hey…" Vegeta uttered, catching Goku's attention as he looked away. "You did… well in there."

"You think so? I'm still really nervous about this stuff." Goku admitted.

"That's understandable. Most people would be in your situation. All that matters is that you pressed through. I'm proud of you." Vegeta praised him, causing Goku's heart to flutter.

"You might not be saying that if they had tried to stick me with a needle." Goku murmured with a small smile.

"Maybe." Vegeta smirked as he drank his coffee. "But I still think you'd do fine. You're much stronger than you give yourself credit for."

Goku couldn't say it, but some part of him disagreed with that.

…

A little while later, Goku found himself skipping stones at a nearby riverbend.

Vegeta sat close next to him, observing in silence as the pebbles bounced across the surface of the water. Relaxing against Goku's shoulder, he himself occasionally threw some as well, but more so absentmindedly. "Hey… Once all of this is over, what do you think about finding a place to stay, with me ... ?"

"What, you mean like *move* ? But *why* ?" Goku was flabergasted by the suggestion. "You have *everything* at capsule corp."

"Well, it's not like… I'll be leaving *entirely* ." Vegeta rationalized. "I just… I want a place that we can call *ours* . Just the two of us."

"Isn't that the sort of thing that couples are supposed to do after they get married? At least… that's what Chichi told me." Goku pondered it.

"Not *always* … or… It doesn't… *have* to be." The thought of marriage had been the furthest thing on his mind, yet now that Goku brought it up, he suddenly felt a bit awkward.

"Oh." Goku replied simply. If there was any disappointment from his end, Vegeta couldn't tell. "Well, I'm fine with whatever you wanna do, Vegeta."

"You mean you want to…?" Vegeta looked up at him with some hope.

"Yeah, sure. Why not? It seems to be important to you, so I'd be happy to…." Goku grinned.

His response seemed so casual, but as long as Goku was okay with it, then that was all that mattered.

…

When it came time for Goku to meet his Psychiatrist, who was named Raymon, he found that the man was surprisingly nice. Due to the concerns Vegeta and especially Goku had, Raymon clarified from the start that his goal wasn't to dope Goku up on medication but to minimize the amount that he was to take.

He deduced that Goku's primary issues right now were the nightmares and panic attacks he was having and in the end, he decided to try him on something called Desyrel at 200mg alongside the suggestion of melatonin. Goku, of course, wasn't thrilled but didn't say much in front of the doctor.

Vegeta took care of the prescription, getting it filled at the pharmacy right after. He also bought a bottle of melatonin simply by suggestion.

…

Unfortunately, when it came to Vegeta trying to get him to take his medication that night, Goku adamantly refused at first.

"Kakarot, please… You need to take this." Vegeta had a cup of water and the pill in his hand. Goku had had no issue with taking the melatonin, probably because it was in gummy form and looked like candy to him, but the pill was another matter entirely.

Goku turned his face away. "No, I don't trust it..."

"Well, that seems a little soon to make such a decision, wouldn't you think? Now tell me, why don't you trust it…?" Vegeta humored him, sitting down next to him. "Hm?"

Goku's response, however, was one he couldn't have possibly accounted for.

"It… looks like something he gave me… I-I know it was a white pill, just like that one…" Goku rubbed his arm, desperate to calm down.

"I… wasn't aware…" Vegeta wasn't sure how to proceed on this one. "But still… Even… if it *were* , he had you on a bunch of *other* pills as well. This is only *one* , and the doctor told you this might get rid of your nightmares, so don't you at least want to give it a *try*... ?"

"I'm afraid…" Goku said.

"There's nothing to be afraid of. This medication is only there to help you rest." Vegeta assured. Although was hard to say, because he *did* understand Goku's reason for hesitation.

"But it'll knock me out." Goku muttered. "And I won't be able to…"

"Listen to me..." Vegeta soothed. "I promise that I won't allow *anything* to happen to you… You just have to trust me. And trust the doctor. Everything is going to be okay, and if you don't like it, then we'll ask him to put you on something else."

After a long moment of thinking it through, Goku hesitantly took the pills and chased them down with some water.

"Good..." Vegeta placed the cup on the dresser, joining him under the covers. He relaxed an arm around him. "Just let me know if you start to feel strange, alright…?"

"Okay…" Goku said, hugging against him, but didn't say much else. About thirty minutes later, the medication finally kicked in and Goku started to become drowsy.

He yawned, his eyes half-lidded as he turned over onto his back, silently gazing off to the side.

Seeing Goku's neck in that moment, something stirred inside of Vegeta. He briefly traced some fingers over his skin and moved forward, kissing him not too far beneath his ear. He gently sucked at the skin, enough to leave a mark, but refused to do anything further than that.

When he pulled back, Goku gazed up at him, too tired to respond. He soon closed his eyes, dozing off.

He looked so serene.

And vulnerable.

To think that some sick bastard had taken advantage of Goku when he was like this, it was just… *imperceivable* .

At the same time, Vegeta knew from personal experience that there were people who were depraved enough to go to such lengths. This entire event had served as an all too harsh reminder of that.

Vegeta laid against his chest, focused solely on the sound of Goku's heartbeat, and making sure he was resting properly.

…

Several hours later, he felt Goku shifted under him.

He tried to get up, but almost tripped, barely awake.

"Kakarot, hey, be careful…" Vegeta jumped out of bed, in just enough time to catch him. "Where are you going?"

"I needa use the bathroom." Goku slurred.

"Then here. Let me help you. You're going to end up falling." Vegeta kept his grip around Goku's waist, holding the man's arm over his own shoulder to provide support.

With Vegeta's assistance, Goku made his way to the bathroom and did his business. They returned a few minutes later, Goku immediately laying back down on the bed without bothering to cover himself. Vegeta pulled down Goku's shirt so his stomach wasn't exposed anymore and spread the blankets over them once more. Goku was quick to fall back to sleep.

At some point, Vegeta found himself startled when the Saiyan suddenly crawled on top of him, most of his weight resting on his chest and stomach.

"Hey, what are you…?" Vegeta started to speak, but a moment later, he heard him snoring.

So that's it. He must have moved in his sleep.

He embraced the sleeping man with an fond expression, brushing some hair out of his face and trying to ignore the drool dripping from his mouth. He was actually quite used to this by now.

…

About a week later, Goku confessed that the medication they had given him had been causing him intense nausea and vertigo, so at Vegeta's suggestion, he had the psychiatrist change it to something called Ziprasidone, which Goku didn't respond well to at all.

The tremors were unbearable, which ended up leading to a minor *'dispute'* between Vegeta and the psychiatrist, who wanted to put Goku on another medication to counteract the tremors instead of switching him off of it.

"Are you not hearing him? He just said he doesn't want ***more mediation***." Vegeta had laid his foot down. *"What he needs and wants is another one entirely that doesn't cause him him to shake like this in the first place! Besides, he's already made it perfectly clear that whatever you have him on right now isn't helping him feel any better."*

The doctor, not wanting to go against or argue with him, then decided to try Goku on a medication called prazosin. This one caused him arrhythmia and blurred vision, so it too had to be stopped.

In the end, Raymon finally switched him to Catapres.

Goku almost refused to take it entirely this time because he was so tired of everything failing and causing him bad side effects. Vegeta just barely managed to convince him to go through with it.

As it turned out, it was *also* a blood pressure medication, so it *did* cause him occasional balance issues and dizziness, but as long as he didn't move around too much when under its influence, he was fine and seemed overall content in the long run. He still had nightmares from time to time, but it helped without some of the other side effects he had experienced.

The one issue with this was, for some reason or another, he kept waking up after getting about four hours of rest and not being able to get back to sleep. So after some working around it, Raymond had him split a higher dosage between two different pills, 0.2mg when he went to sleep and 0.2mg when he woke up and needed to get *back* to sleep. Because of this, he would often end up sleeping until early afternoon, but, much to Vegeta's relief, it seemed they finally had the nightmares managed for the most part.

…

Goku still wasn't talking about many things, but he had been trying to work on turning to his coping mechanisms more so than before, even relying on other outlets.

He had been clean for over three weeks now, which was the longest he had went without hurting himself in a while.

Quite frankly, Vegeta had never been prouder of him.

So he decided at this point that maybe it was about time to give Goku back some of his freedom.

…

"So I've been thinking about it, and I've decided…" Vegeta began one night, running his fingers through his hair. He seemed to do that a lot. He couldn't help it. Goku's hair was just so soft and fluffy. "I'm going to allow you to go wherever you want again. But, in exchange, you must promise me something."

"What is it?" Goku inquired.

"You will allow me to continue checking your body regularly for injuries and if you so much as get the urge to hurt yourself or even *start* to, then you're to *come* to one of us or call somebody immediately. Do you understand?"

"But what if I still relapse…?" Goku looked down, uncertain. "I'm afraid you'll get mad at me…"

"No, I won't..." Vegeta swore. "I just want you to communicate with me and not hide anything. Deal…?"

Goku was quiet for a long moment before nodding. "Okay."

Vegeta pulled him close, kissing his forehead. "Good. That's all I ask of you."

…

It wasn't all that surprising that word of Vegeta's relationship with Goku had spread.

Certain people didn't like it.

But despite that, nobody spoke of it around Bulma or Vegeta out of fear of incurring their wrath, yet Goku was a different matter entirely. He was seen as an easy target for harassment just because of how friendly he seemed.

"Is it true that you're dating Vegeta…?" It was some lady who first confronted him. He'd seen her around before, she always seemed to have some sort of chip on her shoulder, and many of her coworkers didn't particularly like her either.

"Yeah. Why?" Goku wasn't sure why it was their business, but he saw no reason to hide it.

"...Holy shit." She said. "So you *are* gay."

"I'm what now?" Goku looked confused.

"*Gay. Homosexual*. It means you like *men*, Goku. Don't tell me you really don't know what that word means." Even Goku could tell he was being mocked by her tone. "Hell, I'll bet that's the *real* reason your *wife* left you, *isn't* it? You were *cheating* on her with *him*. That would explain why *he* was always going off as well."

"Cheating?" Now Goku was irritated. "Of course not, I wouldn't do that! And nor would Vegeta."

"Oh, *sure you wouldn't* ." She clearly didn't believe him. "A *lot* of gay men hide it from their wives."

"Okay, first off, I'm *not* gay. I like both men and women the same, or at least… on some level, I guess?" Goku honestly didn't know how one would label his feelings, and quite frankly he didn't care to. "But even if I *were,* Chichi and I aren't together anymore, so we can date whoever we want. What difference does it make whether I like men or women?"

He did know that not all guys liked men, sure, but from the way she was acting about it, it seemed like it was something horrible to her.

Why was this any of her business in the first place?

And for her to assume cheating was just...

"What *difference* does it make?" The woman was clearly aghast at his admission. She stepped forward, jabbing a finger at Goku's chest. "It's *unnatural* ."

"Unnatural *how* ?" Goku's eyebrows furrowed.

"Because it's a sin against against God! Against *nature* ." She sputtered, getting right in Goku's face. "Men and women were *made* for each other. The thing between your legs… Do you even know what that's for?"

"You mean my weiner?" Goku asked. "That's for going to the bathroom and having sex with with people."

"Not people, Goku. *Women*. *Your penis* was made to go into a *woman's vagina*. Didn't you have parents to teach you this?"

"I don't know… I don't really remember my parents. They died when I was just a baby and I was sent here…" Goku said in a low voice.

She paused for a moment before scoffing. "Well, that sure explains a lot."

"Look, buddy, the point is men are supposed to be with women." A man suddenly quipped. "Our bodies were designed to have sex with women so they can bare *our* children. A man can't do that with another *man* , and a woman can't do that with another *woman* . Because we weren't *made* to."

Goku was quiet as he heard his words. "What does being able to have kids have to do with anything?"

"Because we're supposed to go forth and *multiply* ." The woman said. "You're both men, fully capable of putting seed into a woman, one who would bear your children, ones who already *have.* You can't do that with him."

"So? We could still always adopt if we wanted a child that badly. I mean my grandpa adopted *me* , and *I* turned out just *fine* …" Goku said.

"Oh my god, you really don't get it, *do* you…?" The woman sounded exasperated.

"No, I don't, because you're not making any sense." Goku retorted.

"Look, all you need to know is this. The life you're living is *wrong* . God hates *homosexuality* , and *bisexuality* or *whatever* you want to call it. It's an *abomination* ."

"Gosh. You know… that sure doesn't sound like a very nice god." Goku muttered.

"What? How *dare* you?!" The woman was clearly outraged by his response. She leaned in, getting so close that she was breathing in Goku's face. "Don't you *care* about your own *children* ? They shouldn't be exposed to that! It's not normal, it's *disgusting* ."

"Hey, can you back off? You're getting too close." Goku was trying to stay as calm as possible but she was in his personal space. "We don't do that stuff around our kids. And, besides why would some god care if two guys like each other, anyway? We're not hurting anybody."

" *Not hurting anybody* ? Of *course* you would think that. You've been brainwashed by society to think that *sodomy* is *normal* , you queer!" She spat with venom, slamming a hand into his chest.

"Hey!" Goku backed up, not wanting to be in the middle of a conflict like this.

" *Queer!* " She repeated. Everybody around her had grown silent. "I'll bet you two have been grooming your sons too, *haven't* you? Just like the *majority* of your kind do. Your wife was *right* to leave you!"

This was a point that she had crossed the line. People were starting to circle around them now; A couple even began to record the confrontation on their phone.

"What?!" Goku was completely stunned at the fact that she could even draw such an accusation. "I… How can you even-"

Again.

"Queer!"

And again.

Goku's back was now pressed against the wall.

*What the hell is wrong with this woman? I've never seen somebody **act** this way before.*

*Chichi and I have gotten into arguments before, sure, but it was never over something this stupid. She's **insane…** !*

"Hey, leave him alone! He hasn't done anything to you!" All of a sudden, a voice stopped her in her tracks. It was Trunks, who had apparently overheard the commotion.

"Hey, isn't that Ms. Bulma's son?" Somebody whispered.

"You shouldn't be acting this way. I'm telling my mom about this!" Trunks snapped.

Goku didn't care to stick around after that, not even for a second. He pulled away from the grasp of the woman, who had kept pushing him back against the wall, and walked past Trunks without a

word.

Goku clutched at his chest, trying to ignore the pain shooting through it from the oncoming panic attack. Just barely, he managed to keep his breaths even.

Placing two fingers on his forehead he teleported to Vegeta.

What he didn't expect was to appear right in the line of one of Vegeta's ki blasts.

"Woah!" He stumbled back, blocking the attack with his arms. Since he was in base form and had fallen behind on his training, however, it was able to leave some decent size injuries.

"Kakarot?!" Vegeta's eyes widened.

"Ah... Sorry…" Goku grabbed at his chest once more. So much pressure, he could barely breathe.

"You idiot! You need to be more careful…" Vegeta scolded him with growing concern as he moved over closer, dodging a beam from one of the bots. "So what, did you come here to watch me train again? Not that I mind, but-"

"Not now, Vegeta... Maybe later… I just… needed to get away for a bit… from that…" Goku said in a low voice, his bangs shadowing his eyes as he walked over to a random edge of the room and sat down against the wall, his mind already taking him into numerous directions.

Except this time, he didn't hurt himself, he refused to. He just curled in on himself, pulling his knees against his chest and burying his face in his arms.

Watching him, Vegeta found it was completely impossible to continue focusing on training any further when his lover was right there in front of him clearly suffering for some unknown reason.

He had to be there for him.

After turning off all the training bots and the artificial gravity, he walked over and sat down beside him. Well, more like behind him since Goku was leaning sideways against the wall.

"Did something happen…?" Goku felt arms working their way around his waist, hugging him from behind and snapping him out of his thoughts. Slowly, the smaller Saiyan left a trail of kisses down the nape of his neck, breathing into his ear, "You can talk to me, you know..."

"I told you it's nothing." Goku gnawed at the inside of his cheek before he dismissed the conversation. "I'm fine…"

"Bullshit." Vegeta saw through it immediately. Obviously you're *not* fine, or you wouldn't be sitting on the floor right now, looking so damn pathetic… So what is it, already? Really…"

"Vegeta…" Goku's shoulders shaking. "Do you… think it's okay for us to be together? I… Some people… think it's… wrong… for two guys to like each other. It's apparently unnatural or something…"

The truth was the woman's hostility had affected him more than he wanted to admit.

" *Unnatural* ? Now who the hell *told* you that…? I'll beat the living shit out of them if I have to." Vegeta growled, not liking that people were snooping into their private business.

"It was… one of the staff members… She started screaming at me and saying some strange words I've never heard before…"

Vegeta could only assume it was some slurs again or something of the sort.

"Ignore them. They don't know jack *shit* about us." He said with a scoff. "As long as we're happy together, that's the only thing that's important…"

"..." Goku couldn't bring himself to respond. He was too distraught and trying to wrap his head around Vegeta's words versus the other woman's.

Not liking how quiet Goku was being, Vegeta moved around so they were facing each other. He gave Goku a reassuring squeeze on his shoulders before kissing his forehead. "I mean it, Kakarot. Don't listen to those bastards, you hear me? They only want to bring us down and hurt us…"

"...For the first time in months, some part of me actually wants to *live* again… And that's… only because of you..." Goku choked out. "So then... *how* ...? How could any of this possibly be wrong if being with you makes me feel so happy…? I don't understand it."

"That's because it's *not* wrong…" Vegeta tenderly stroked his cheek where some tears had started to fall obviously due to his anxiety and nerves. "We're not hurting anybody, are we? We're two consenting adults minding our own business, so *they* should as well… This bond we share… It *is real*… just as real as any other… So, please, you can't *doubt* yourself… nor *us*. Okay? I won't allow *anybody* to take this away from us."

Some part of him knew what Goku was going through. Even he himself had been there before. But he was confident in his sexuality. He knew exactly what he wanted - who he was attracted to - and he would make no apologies for that.

"A long time ago, I… My father… He tried to get me to agree to marrying some older woman I wasn't interested in… It was a cousin of mine. He said I was to eventually impregnate her so I could carry on the Royal bloodline. I refused to, of course… Mainly because I didn't want to set my limitations to just girls, if the age gap and the fact that we were related wasn't bad enough to me… But also… If I were to *marry* somebody… I wanted it to be somebody I could actually *tolerate* . Naturally, he didn't like that… the idea that I was interested in other guys as well. It disgusted him…"

"So what did he… do?" Goku asked with some hesitation.

Vegeta let out a small laugh, but it wasn't from amusement. "He punched me, and told me never to bring it up again. In all fairness, I suppose it's not… unusual for kids to have *some* sort of disagreement with their parents every *now and then* , is it…?"

"That's…" Goku paused, trying to think of some way to respond. It was a lot to process.

"Awful?" Vegeta finished plainly, with a downcast look on his face. "Heh, well, in all fairness, our people aren't exactly known for being saints, Kakarot, least of all my father…"

"Yeah, but you were a *child* …" Goku argued weakly.

"Perhaps… but what other choice did we have…? Our population kept declining, so… the only way to deal with that was by creating more babies. So in some ways, I understand it, even if I don't agree with it… But even *then* , it was partially his *own* fault… He'd have people killed for the *stupidest* of reasons, and others he'd banish or send off on missions that they'd have next to no chance of surviving. He not only exiled my *brother* over his power level, but then he turned around and sold *me* to that bastard Frieza as some… *bargaining chip* . His *own sons* ." Vegeta suddenly realized then that this was starting to go off topic from the original subject, into a much darker territory he thought he had left behind.

"Vegeta… You know… how you… said you had been… raped…? Was that… before you were handed over to Frieza, or… after…?" Goku wasn't sure if Vegeta would be okay answering that and didn't want to put any pressure on him.

"..." Vegeta was quiet, his body growing somewhat stiff at the question. He gazed away. "It was after… I was… seven when it first started… I… I'm sorry, this got off topic…"

"No, it's okay." Goku replied a bit awkwardly. "If there's something bothering you, you can always talk to me about it. I don't always know what to say about some things, but… I will… listen…"

Vegeta bit his lip, but once again decided to change the subject. He didn't know if he'd ever be able to talk about those things.

"...You don't need to worry about that other stuff… The only thing I want you know is this…" Leaning closer, he briefly pressed their lips together. "There's nothing wrong with us being together, even if we *are* both men. Anybody who tries to convince you otherwise doesn't know what they're talking about… It's like I said before, as long as you and I are happy, that's all that matters… Y-you *are* , *aren't* you…?

Even if Goku had said he was, Vegeta had to make absolutely certain. As much as he loved him, he could never *force* him to be with him if he didn't want to.

"Yeah, of *course* I am. I told you that already…" Goku said in a soft, reassuring tone.

"Then *stay* with me…" Vegeta tightly pulled him into his arms, resting his chin over his shoulder.

"Okay…" Without a second thought, Goku returned the hug.

Goku was about to speak up but right as he did, the door opened and Bulma stepped in.

"I am so sorry, Goku. Trunks just told me what happened. That woman had no business talking to you or treating you that way. She didn't hurt you, did she?" She walked over towards him.

"I'm fine, Bulma… She did hit me, but it didn't hurt. I just didn't like that she was getting all up in my face like that when I hadn't done anything to her. She started prying into my business out of nowhere and then she accused me of cheating on Chichi with Vegeta, that was the reason we broke up… I tried to tell her I wouldn't do that but then she started saying that liking another guy is…" Goku murmured. "She said it was unnatural and wrong and she even… accused me of… touching Gohan and Goten… I would never *do* that…"

"I know." Bulma sighed, pinching the bridge of her nose. "This isn't the *first* time she's caused trouble like this. Some of the others have complained before because she kept starting shit with people. I just fired her and I'm going to call a meeting later to discuss this because some people still apparently have no idea exactly *what* a *no discrimination policy means* ."

Even as Bulma left, Vegeta didn't say anything, he just continued to hold Goku in his arms, barely containing his rage towards the unnamed woman who had caused such a mess. If Bulma hadn't let her go, then he'd have had a word or two to say himself.

…

That evening, Vegeta found himself showering yet again, but the last thing he expected was to hear a knock on the door and for Goku to call out to him.

"Hey, Vegeta…?"

"What do you want, Kakarot?" Vegeta asked.

"Can I… bathe with you?" Came the meek question, one he could barely even make out for the water running and wouldn't have been able to if Goku hadn't cracked the door open.

At first, Vegeta was speechless, but knew he had to give some sort of response.

"I don't… mind… but are you sure you're okay with that…?" He asked. Sure, they had bathed *together* ***before*** , but not since the assault.

"...Well, I did sort of get used to bathing around you, so… I thought that… maybe… I'd like to do that again... I understand if you don't want to, though, I should just… go…" Goku said, preparing to leave. He knew that Vegeta had gotten really upset the last time he came into the bathroom while he was bathing, back on Beerus's world, so he wasn't sure if he was crossing over a line or not.

"No, it's… fine… Come in." Vegeta glanced out of the curtain to see Goku enter the room with a small blush, nervously holding his change of clothes against his chest.

After a long moment, the Saiyan finally put them aside and began to strip himself of his gi, avoiding his partner's gaze entirely, as if he felt like he was doing something wrong somehow.

When Goku stepped into the shower, he immediately turned away so his back was was facing him. For some reason or another, he couldn't bring himself to look at Vegeta's body now without feeling guilty or dirty about it.

He didn't deserve to.

This wasn't mentioning the ever persisting shame he felt over his *own* body, self doubts, which were hitting him full force all over again.

Why did I think this would be a good idea? I feel so stupid right now...

"What's the matter with you…? First you ask to bathe with me, yet now you can't even *look* at me? I swear… you're such a mess." Vegeta said with affection.

Goku's ears heated up a bit when he felt lips against his back.

"Do you want me to clean your back…?" The prince offered.

Goku nodded.

"Then sit down." Vegeta adjusted the shower, before sitting down behind him. "I'm going to wash your hair first, is that alright with you?"

"Mhm." Goku sat down on the surface of the bathtub.

As Vegeta grabbed a shampoo bottle and began lathering some of the substance into his hair, Goku closed his eyes, relaxing at the contact like he always did.

Once Vegeta was finished, he moved onto Goku's back. He was careful to avoid his tail scar, not wanting to repeat the same mistake as before, but making sure to thoroughly soak his skin in suds.

"Do you… mind if I wash your back too?" Goku asked, when Vegeta began to rinse him off. "I'd like to, if that's okay."

"Well, alright, but surely you must know by now that you can't do that if you're turned away, right?" Vegeta teased lightly.

"...I know." Goku said, before slowly moving around so they were facing each other each other.

Vegeta had his elbow on the side of the tub. He smirked at him when their eyes met. "See, now that wasn't so hard, was it?"

"Don't tease me… This stuff is embarrassing…" Goku sulked.

"Embarrassing? Why…?" Vegeta frowned slightly. He knew it wasn't only about Goku's body this time, because he seemed to have mostly grown comfortable with being naked around him when he was bathing, so Vegeta could only assume it had to be more related to the fact that he *himself* was naked as well. "Is it… because of *him*... Or…"

"I dunno... I think it's… just cuz we're together now…" Goku said. "I felt like this around Chichi too sometimes."

"So what? You think I'm going to call you a *pervert* or something?" Vegeta taunted.

"No, of course not! That's-" Goku shivered at the word and the way Vegeta said it.

"Relax. I'm only joking." Vegeta assured. "All the same. There's nothing wrong with finding a partner attractive, you know. You don't have to feel ashamed for looking at me while we're bathing..."

"I… It's not… like that… I mean I… *do* like you… I just… I don't know how to describe it… I think you're pretty and all, and *really really handsome* too, but… I don't… get *turned on*… by looking at you… like Bulma probably would have…" It was a strange and hard confession to make, he could only hope that it wouldn't offend Vegeta. Immediately after, he tried to explain it further. "But it's not just *you*, I-I've never felt those things… Not even for Chichi either, so I-I don't want you to think I don't like you cuz of this, cuz I *do*, I just-"

"Kakarot…" Vegeta interrupted him, sensing how frustrated he was getting over this. "You don't need to explain yourself to me. I kind of already figured all that out by now just by being with you."

"Y-you did? And… you're… okay with that?" Some part of Goku had always felt bad for not being able to be attracted to him or Chichi in the same way they had been attracted to him. He *wanted* to, but it just wasn't how he operated.

"Yeah, of course. It's just part of who you are. As long as you *do* have feelings for me, I don't *care* what form they may take. Although…" A devilish grin made it's way to Vegeta's lips, as he brushed a finger across Goku's chest, creating a circle. "If you could… I'd like you to repeat what you said just now."

"What I… said?" Goku inquired.

"You said I was… pretty… and something else. What was it?" Vegeta knew what he had said, but he wanted to get a rise out of him.

Goku's face flushed bright red. He lowered his head embarrassment. "I said… you were… pretty… and… really… really… handsome too…"

"Mn. Tell me more." Vegeta moved closer, kissing his neck.

"Vegeta…" Goku whined, not liking to be asked to say such things out loud.

"What?" Vegeta stared at him lovingly.

"I'm no good at these things…" Goku pouted.

"I know, but still, I want to hear what all you have to say about me…" Vegeta said with some expectancy. When he saw Goku was too bashful to give a response, however, he decided to humor him. "What's your favorite thing, then?"

"...My… favorite thing? That's uh… Y-your hands…" Goku sputtered out.

"My hands…?" Vegeta faltered, somewhat confused. That was the last answer he had expected to hear from him. "What about my hands…?"

"...They're… strong, but… they can also be gentle too… like when you hold me… and touch me… I really like that." Goku mumbled.

Vegeta didn't know how to respond to that at first, especially considering how such a statement could have been taken if he didn't know Goku better than he did.

He pressed his palm against Goku's chest, where his heart was pounding rapidly. "...So… you like it when I touch you, huh…? Then… how's this…?"

Goku timidly averted his gaze as Vegeta's hand moved downwards. He shielded his stomach, giggling at the ticklish sensation. "Hey, cut it out…! Now you're makin' it awkward."

Vegeta smirked softly when he saw the smile on Goku's face. "Sorry, I couldn't help myself… I really like it when you laugh."

"Liar. You just wanted to mess with me." Goku sulked.

"Well, that too." Vegeta admitted with a small chuckle.

"Jerk." Goku puffed his cheek out in that annoyingly adorable way that Vegeta loved more than anything.

"All the same… I…" Vegeta then reached back up and lifted his chin between his index finger and thumb, causing a look of confusion to pass over Goku's face.

Goku almost thought Vegeta was going to kiss him, but he wasn't sure.

Vegeta, however, retracted his hand, bashfully turning his head away and clutching at his arm. He looked self-conscious.

"I don't… mind… t… touching you… or holding you… As long as you need me too… If it… helps, I mean… N-Not that I mind, *anyways* , I just…" He paused, his voice shaky as he ruffled up

some of his hair due to his nerves. "Damn it, I'm probably making this even more awkward than it already was right now, aren't I…? I'm sorry…"

"No, i-it's alright… I get what you're trying to say…" Goku didn't want him getting frustrated with himself over this. "Heh, I guess this is… a little strange for both of us, huh…?"

"It sure seems that way, doesn't it?" Vegeta admitted, finding a small amount of humor in the situation. His smile, however, soon faded.

"...Hey… About… what you said before." He felt his ears heating up, struggling to speak. "You're… pretty too…"

"Vegeta..." Goku's heart fluttered in response to being called pretty. Vegeta didn't give such compliments often.

Both of the Saiyans were a fiery mess after that, so Vegeta shoved the rag against him and turned around, knowing he needed to avert the conversation. "Come on, I thought you said you wanted to wash my back, didn't you? So do it, already... Idiot…"

"Oh, uh right… sorry…" Goku giggled. He took the rag and squirted some lavender scented body wash into it, before pressing it up against Vegeta's neck.

After a second, he began to scrub it into his skin, working his way down and making sure that his back was thoroughly soaked with suds.

In that moment, the fact that they were both naked together suddenly wasn't as intimidating to Goku as it had been before.

…

"Say, Goku, are you planning to get Vegeta a gift for White Day?"

"White Day?" Goku looked with confusion at Bulma who was sitting across the table from him. They were in the dining room. "Isn't that for guys to give gifts to girls? At least that's what Chichi told me. Valentine's day was the opposite, I think… Actually, I considered getting him chocolates *that* day, but I'm not a woman and Vegeta ain't either so it seems strange to me. How would that even work for us…?"

"Well…, I guess I can understand your confusion, but I think you should just do what feels comfortable to you." Bulma advised. "Hell, even *I've* received chocolates from other women on Valentine's day. Likewise, some guys I know have given gifts to other men on *White* Day. It's not anything abnormal."

"Oh, I see… But what should I get him then?" Goku mused.

"Well…, if you want *my* advice, I'd suggest getting him something with dark chocolate, that's actually Vegeta's *favorite* ." Bulma whispered slightly.

"Dark chocolate, huh…?" Goku thought it over, before blushing a bit. "Could I maybe bake him something, then? Like cookies…?"

"Yeah, cookies are quite common, So if that's what you want to make for him, then I say go for it." Bulma grinned.

"Also, I kinda wanna get him some kind of gift too but I really don't know what he'd like…" Goku said.

Bulma thought about it. "Well, Vegeta may grumble about it, but he's really not all that picky about the gifts he receives. Just try getting him some flowers or a stuffed animal or something. It doesn't have to be anything fancy. And even if you *can't* think of anything, what I think he'd probably want more than anything is just for you to be by his side."

Goku wasn't sure what to think of hearing that at first. The suggestion she made sounded absolutely ridiculous. A stuffed animal???

Would Vegeta really be okay with something like that? Chichi always liked those things… But Vegeta would probably just call it childish...

Then again, Bulma said he'd probably accept anything and she was married to him… So… maybe it would be alright, after all…?

...

Before coming to Earth, Vegeta never cared to celebrate *any* kind of holiday, he *still* didn't, in fact. Not really anyways. He found it so pointless. But if there was food involved, Vegeta might make an exception *sometimes* .

So when the mention of White Day left Bulma's mouth, he already knew what she was insinuating immediately. He didn't like it, but in the end, she won.

Of *course* she did. She *always* did.

Unfortunately, just like Goku, Vegeta wasn't an expert when it came to picking out gifts either. Outside of a fancy milk chocolate bar, nothing felt suitable to him.

Technically speaking, Goku was a relatively simple person, so he'd probably be content with *anything* he got.

But Vegeta didn't *want* it to be *just anything* .

He wanted it to be *special* .

He could propose the steak house again, since they still hadn't had their date, but considering Goku's recent issue with food, he didn't know if the option would be well received right now.

In the end, all he could think to do was leave the option up to Goku, and let him choose for *himself* what he wanted.

…

White Day

Vegeta found Goku sitting on the floor of the Gravity Chamber that evening.

He was starting to think that this was Goku's favorite spot to just sit, because it seemed like he had been coming here a lot.

"Hey…" Vegeta muttered.

"Hey, I-" Goku started to speak, but was cut off when a chocolate bar was shoved in his face.

Goku looked up to see that Vegeta was avoiding his gaze with a blush.

"Here… It's… White Day, right…? Bulma said I should get you chocolate… So I did." The prince muttered. "I don't… really have any gifts for you or anything though, since I wasn't sure what you'd want, but I guess we could… do something later, if you'd like."

Goku paused, before taking the chocolate.

"Thanks… Actually…" He then buried his face in his arm in embarrassment, holding out a small stuffed bear of some kind and a small baggy, which had his cookies in it. "I got you some stuff as well… But I… was worried you'd think it was stupid…"

"Of course I wouldn't. Did you make these?" Vegeta's expression softened as he sat down in front of him and took the gifts from him, not commenting on the bandages he had noticed on Goku's fingers.

"Yeah… um… Bulma said you liked dark chocolate, so I decided to bake some cookies for you… I hope you like them okay." Goku said.

Vegeta took one out and bit into it. "This is good."

"You mean you really like it?" Goku asked.

"Yeah, I do…" Vegeta finished it off, before laying the cookie bag beside him. "So did you… make this too?"

This time he was referring to the small stuffed bear that Goku had given him. The stitching wasn't by any means of the word perfect, but the object was at least recognizable.

"Mhm, I-uh sorta asked Chichi to teach me how to sew some. I'm still nowhere near as good at this stuff as she is, though, so I kept messing up and pricking my fingers, haha…" Goku explained, laughing a bit.

At realizing that, Vegeta grabbed Goku's hands, caressing his fingers.

"So that's why you… These injuries, then…" he was almost at a loss of words. "They're because of *me* , *aren't* they…?"

"What? Don't say it like that. I just… I thought you wouldn't take it seriously unless I went through the effort of making something for you myself." Goku said. "Then again, maybe making a bear was stupid after all. You're not really the type of person who seems to care about that sort of thing..."

"No, it's… cute… Thanks." Vegeta muttered, his cheeks becoming flushed. "But I still haven't gotten you *your* gift… What do you want? We could go somewhere, like the restaurant we went to before, or-"

"Just… kiss me…" Goku said, moving closer to him.

"That's all?" Vegeta faltered, having expected something more.

"Yeah… Are you… okay with that?" Goku wanted to know.

"Sure… Whatever you want to do is fine with me, Kakarot…" Vegeta was a bit surprised when Goku actually took the initiative to close the gap between them.

As they deepened the kiss, however, Vegeta couldn't help but get the feeling that something was off about Goku's behavior. He was much more receptive than usual. Well,… *receptive* wasn't the word he was looking for. Rather, he was bolder in his actions than usual, as if he was forcing himself to go through the motions but wasn't actually into it, at least not fully.

He tried to tell himself that he was just his imagination since Goku was the one who had initiated this, but his suspicions became more pressing with the next words that came out of Goku's mouth.

"Hey, we should take this to the bedroom… Can we?" He suggested, tightly embracing Vegeta's neck with his arms as Vegeta kissed him again.

"You want to…?" Vegeta asked, desperately wanting to believe that Goku wasn't doing what he thought he was.

"If you don't mind…" Goku replied with a nod.

"Alright, hold still…" With that confirmation, Vegeta lifted him up and carried him back to their bedroom.

After tossing both of their items onto the dresser, he laid Goku down on the bed, once again claiming his lips and tongue in a battle for dominance, one which he quickly won as always.

That was until Goku's hands started to wander aimlessly around his waist, eventually sliding up into his shirt. When his hands rubbed against his pecs, Vegeta's breath hitched slightly at the contact, a bright blush forming on his face. He could feel the intention behind it and knew exactly what Goku was trying to do, even if he wasn't particularly skilled at it.

"Kakarot, wait…" He swallowed, taking his hands into his own from outside his tank top as he tried his best to fight off the heat rushing through his body.

"What is it…?" Goku asked.

Vegeta looked at him with apprehension. "Are you… really sure about this?"

"I don't know…" Goku admitted. "But this is something you've wanted for months now, right…? I wanna make you happy… Besides, I am… sort of in the mood."

" *Sort of* …?" Vegeta's heart ached at hearing that. "Kakarot… that's not… *enough*... If we… *do* that, it needs to be something that *you* want. Something that you're *ready* for… And you're *not* right now… I can *tell* …"

As he spoke, he reached up and traced his fingers along Goku's jawline. "You're just afraid… that I'm going to leave you… *aren't* you…?"

"I'm sorry… It's just…" Goku tried to blink away the liquid fogging up his vision. "You're always… doing things for me… and taking care of me…, and I can't even…. do *one basic thing* now… Something that every *normal* person is *able* to. But if doing this… would make you happy, then I…"

His voice cracked as he frantically tried to rationalize it.

" *No* , your body isn't some… *transaction* to me ... I will *not* take advantage of you like this." The words came out harsher than intended. He felt an immediate pang of guilt when tears began streaming down Goku's cheeks, sobs escaping his lips.

"Hey… No, no, no, shh… please… Don't cry…" Using both hands, he desperately wiped away his tears, but they kept falling. "Kakarot…"

Vegeta felt a lump form in his throat, wondering if he had said the right thing. Maybe Goku had taken his words as a rejection of his body?

*What else was I **supposed** to say?*

Shit…

*I've got to fix this… but **how** ?*

"Hey…" Hugging him tight, he whispered into his ear. "Do you mind… if I let you in on a little secret…? Between just the two of us..."

Goku became a bit quieter, signifying that he was listening.

"The truth is… I'm *also* nervous about that stuff… Having sex with you, I mean…" Vegeta said.

"You are…?" Goku was surprised to hear him admit something like that. He sniffled.

"Yes, I am… I… haven't had slept with another man in years, and the last time was…" Vegeta averted his gaze. "Well, it wasn't… consensual, so… I don't want… to risk *hurting* you, the way *he* hurt *me* …"

"...You *won't,* though…" As Goku spoke, he reached up and traced his fingers along Vegeta's jawline, his chest burning as he offered himself to him. "I trust you…"

Vegeta swallowed at hearing that, feeling ashamed of himself when blood suddenly rushed to his groin.

He would be lying if he said he didn't want to touch his skin or feel his body in his hands; to be able to *admire* those special parts of him that Goku kept hidden from the world and everyone else. To mark him in all the places he hadn't already and even communicate to him *through* such an act just how much he loved and cherished him.

More than anything, his body *yearned* for him.

But he could *never* cross over a line that Goku wasn't *completely* okay with. And the very idea of him *forcing himself* to endure something like that for Vegeta's sake? It was *out of the question* .

If there was to *ever* be a *first time* for them, then he needed it to be *perfect* .

He shook his head. "No… I don't want you to give yourself up for my sake. We should wait a while, until you're truly ready for this. Until we *both* are…Can we…?"

"...Yeah, alright…" Goku said. If Vegeta wasn't ready, then maybe it was better they hold off.

"Heh, I've got a better idea, anyways…" Vegeta smirked, wanting to lighten the mood.

"What is it…?" Goku inquired.

Vegeta leaned in again, intertwining their fingers and pinning his hands against the bed with a small smirk. "Just let me kiss you some more…"

"Okay." Goku blushed.

So he did.

…

As always, hope somebody liked this...

The Trial

Honestly dunno if I'll update again after this. Maybe if people want it enough, but this has been so difficult and time consuming for me to write(this was probably the hardest chapter in specific, because I'm not a prosecutor, I'm not a defense attorney, I'm not a person in the justice system and I'm sure as fuck not a doctor. I was merely trying to reenact everything to the best of my ability and alter things for Goku's story and I'll tell you it wasn't easy at all, so I apologize sincerely for any inaccuracies.

I wanted this chapter end on a good note, which it SORTA does but I also wanted to tackle some issues I thought of, so it's not completely perfect. Especially with the justice system for male victims of sexual assault and rape not being as good as it should be in my opinion.

I should say that the court in the db universe for this fic is a mix of western jury and Japanese Penal Code. Most of the jury stuff though that I'm basing this more off my personal experience and already had enough trouble writing this as is.

Penal Code on Sexual Crimes

Article 176. (Forcible Indecency)

A person who, through assault or intimidation, forcibly commits an indecent act upon a male or female of not less than thirteen years of age shall be punished by imprisonment with work for not less than 6 months but not more than 10 years. The same shall apply to a person who commits an indecent act upon a male or female under thirteen years of age.

Article 177 (Rape)

A person who, through assault or intimidation, forcibly commits sexual intercourse with a female of not less than thirteen years of age commits the crime of rape and shall be punished by imprisonment with work for a definite term of not less than 3 years. The same shall apply to a person who commits sexual intercourse with a female under thirteen years of age.

Article 178. (Quasi Forcible Indecency: Quasi Rape)

(1) A person who commits an indecent act upon a male or female by taking advantage of loss of consciousness or inability to resist, or by causing a loss of consciousness or inability to resist, shall be punished in the same manner as prescribed for in Article 176.

(2) A person who commits sexual intercourse with a female by taking advantage of a loss of consciousness or inability to resist, or by causing a loss of consciousness or inability to resist, shall be punished in the same matter as prescribed in the preceding Article.

Also, although for my own personal case it took about two years before I had a trial, but, in this, the time goes by much faster because I had to keep coming up with stuff to pass the time.

Onto the story

...

A couple months later with no progress on the therapy situation - partially because Goku himself still didn't want one and subtly diverted the subject anytime it was brought up - his prosecuting team wanted to show him around the court room.

The room was smaller than he'd have liked. It felt cramped. Maybe that was just because he was anxious. The whole experience was nerve wracking, even though he had Vegeta with him. Some faces he recognized, a couple he didn't. And some things, certain conversations he blocked out.

There was a man named Alex who introduced himself as Goku's advocate. He seemed pretty nice.

Everybody on his team was nice. They spoke to him with understanding and compassion, so there was a small amount of reassurance there. They even had the detective go up just to show him what some examples of the trial would be like.

However, the biggest concern on his mind was what the defense would say and he knew that couldn't truly he answered until the day of the trial itself.

He was sitting in his designated spot in the room between Alex and the prosecutor's assistant, Harl, as Sarla and Fran prattled on about something.

"Do you mind if I hold my hand on you? I thought it might help ground you some." Alex could tell he was getting upset, placing his palm on his back.

Goku knew he didn't mean any harm by it, but he didn't like this at all. He didn't want anybody except for Vegeta touching him there or really *anywhere* .

Still, he didn't want to be seen as rude, however, so he couldn't say anything.

That was until Alex's hand brushed against his lower side, due to rubbing his back, which caused him to jump slightly at the contact. Whether it was because he was ticklish or out of sheer discomfort, Goku wasn't sure - he assumed it was both - but he was on the verge of saying something.

Vegeta beat him to it. He was sitting in the seat behind them, not liking the sight. "Hey, he doesn't like being touched by people he's not familiar with. I'd appreciate it if you'd stop."

"Oh, sorry. I wasn't aware." Alex apologized, letting go immediately.

"Kakarot, here." Vegeta said, placing a hand on his shoulder and handing him a fidget referred to as a wacky track. Another one Bulma had given him.

Goku took it, turning it into different shapes to keep himself calm.

Vegeta took this opportunity to hug him from behind.

Slowly, Goku's breathing regulated at the contact. But only because it was Vegeta, only because this was his lover.

After he had calmed down some, Sarla looked back at him, offering a small smile, "Goku, would you like to take a seat up in the witness's chair just to sort of get an idea of what it's like?"

"Yeah, okay… I guess I could." Goku's response was apprehensive, but he agreed to it.

"You can do this. Remember what I've told you." Vegeta said softly, before letting him go up. It wasn't an actual trial right now, but he knew he needed active encouragement throughout every step of this process.

When he sat down in the chair, which had wheels on it and a soft seat, he felt his anxiety start to consume him once more. He kept his head lowered, feeling all the eyes in the room on him at once. There was a microphone attached to the desk in front of him.

I know this isn't the actual trial, but…

Just being here like this… It's…

Goku reached up, nervously pulling down some of his hair to cover his peripheral view and twisting it slightly in his fingers.

An empty seat.

***That man** will probably be sitting there one day.*

I don't want to see his face again.

"I'm afraid that he'll try to start something with me." Goku mumbled.

"I honestly don't think that will be an issue, and, if he does, it will only look bad on him. We'll have plenty of cops on guard right next to him, so if he does try to attack you or something, they'll stop him." Sarla assured him.

"I was wondering about the defense attorney. What kinds of things will he ask?" Goku wanted to know.

"Oh, that's a good question. I'm glad you asked. What the defense attorney will do in a situation like this will be one of two things. Either he'll try to either deny the situation happened entirely, which he's very unlikely to do at this point, or he'll try to say that you consented to what happened, which simply isn't true. We know you didn't want it. You've told us that, multiple times. So if he asks something like, ' *Isn't it true that you consented?'* Then you just say no. You have only one job here. And that's to tell the truth."

"I've occasionally seen stuff on TV where defense attorneys often get really um…" Goku trailed off, trying to find the right word.

"Confrontational?" Sarla finished.

"Yeah, I think that's it... I'm a bit scared that he'll say something mean to me." Goku said.

"So I've met him before, and he seems like a fairly nice guy, so I highly doubt he's going to get rude with you. Most trials aren't anything like what you see on TV."

"They're not?" Goku seemed surprised.

"No, court proceedings are usually much quieter." Sarla confirmed, before going on to explain a bit more about the seating and certain roles of the people in the court.

That's when she asked if she could do a mock direct examination with him.

He agreed to this as well, but he barely held himself together.

The questions started out simple. They were about his hobbies, past work experience(in which he mentioned fieldwork), before eventually going into more personal matters like his falling out with

Chichi which led up to the topic of how he had met Allan, and eventually the assault itself.

"And after he gave you his pills, what happened next?"

This is where he started to lose it.

He didn't even think of using his coping mechanisms, he *couldn't* .

"I um… Well, he had me try the pot, but I didn't like it because it made me choke and I couldn't breathe. I tried to give it back, but he pressured me to try it a couple more times I think it was, uh… I was still coughing, so he had me take another sip of the drink before pulling me in his arms… He was laughing before then, and I um, was too, but it's just cuz I was nervous - I laugh sometimes when I'm anxious. Anyways, I noticed I had started to feel sorta tired, and… what was it…" Just barely, he managed to continue with his story, but found himself digging into his wrist all over again, for the first time in a while, and due to the stress of the situation, he kept losing his train of thought and forgetting what he was saying. "Oh, when he pulled me into his arms, and I-I froze up… That's when he… began to take off my clothes. He pulled off my uwagi, and snapped at me… told me… to untie my obi, s-so I did… I had… never really been in a situation like that before, with somebody ordering me around like that, so I… wasn't really sure how to react… I mean I've had… sex before, but this was… different somehow, because the other times were with somebody I knew… and felt comfortable with. After that, he pulled off my zubon and started… touching me..."

"At some point, did you express discomfort with this?" Sarla asked.

"Y-yeah, I-I even told him that I wasn't comfortable with it… That I didn't want to do that…" Goku murmured, squirming his legs around. Blood was caking his nails, but because of the desk surrounding him, nobody could see it right now. He knew that Vegeta wouldn't be happy, but he couldn't help it. It was the only thing stopping him from having a full on panic attack.

"And did he listen to you?" Sarla asked.

"No. He kept… ignoring me… and told me to relax my legs… At some point, he started… sticking his fingers… inside of my… butt… He said I wanted his… thing… inside of me… because I was… erect… My memories are fuzzy but he kissed me too… and started taking pictures of me or maybe he was recording me, I don't know." Goku wanted to throw up. He didn't want to talk about this. Not in front of all these people.

Vegeta's stomach clenched as he listened to him talk.

"Did you consent to having those pictures taken?"

"No." Goku choked out.

"And what else did he do?"

"He…" Tears welled up in his eyes. "stuck his… penis… inside of me…" Goku bounced his leg, before raising his voice slightly. "I told him I didn't want him to, that I wasn't comfortable. I *told* him, and he said he wouldn't do anything, b-but he did it anyways…"

"When he did that, did it hurt?"

"Y-yeah, a whole lot actually." Goku replied, shakily. "I even shouted because of the pain I was in. I told him it hurt, and he asked if he was crossing a line, but no matter what I said… he kept going anyways and said that I was the… perfect fit because I was… tight… He also knew that I was in pain, because later on he said he didn't know why it hurt me so bad."

He was shaking once again, barely holding himself together.

"I'm so sorry that happened to you, Goku. Did he stick his penis anywhere else?"

"Yeah, uh, there were these times he had to go to the bathroom, which was right next to his… bedroom. He kept pulling out of me and going to wash himself off… and uh…" Goku lost his train of thought for a moment, too nervous and realizing that he had diverted the topic slightly, but, fortunately, Sarla didn't seem to mind.

"Can I ask you what was washing off?" She asked.

Goku was quiet for a long time, but finally he spoke back up. "...It was… poop."

His face turned red at the sheer humiliation of having to say such a thing out loud.

"Of course it was..." Sarla replied in a low, understanding, voice.

"I was still feeling really weak, but I tried to get back up and pull on my clothes. He came back in before I could, though, and pushed me back down on the bed… and told me not to go. After that, he… made me suck his… penis… and balls. I was… having a lot of trouble breathing because he kept shoving it too far into my throat, and I ended up… throwing up… several times. He used his pants to wipe it off my face before… fussing at me and calling me a bunch of names… he told me to… to *record myself* … and said… t-to smile for the camera… I was… crying. I kept telling him I needed to go, but he wouldn't let me, he kept saying he needed to cum first, to record me swallowing it, so he could have me… watch it on the TV with him… Finally, I said that I had an appointment… that I would come back in couple hours so he… let me go after that.. I'm sorry, my memories are all jumbled right now…"

"It's okay, you've done fantastic." Sarla assured him. She had a few more questions to ask after that, but, after a few minutes, concluded that that was enough for the time being.

The first thing he did when he returned to the other seats was crash into Vegeta.

"Kakarot…! Hey, what's…" The hug was a bit strong and sudden for him to know how to react to immediately. He started to push Goku back, but upon seeing tears in his eyes and feeling him shaking, he enveloped him in an embrace, allowing him to rest his face against his chest. "It's alright now… You did great…"

Hearing some of the new details he hadn't heard before had rehashed his anger towards Goku's rapist all over again, but it soon subsided, his overwhelming concern being Goku's mental state.

For the moment, he even chose to ignore the blood on Goku's wrist and nails. Giving him some time to calm down was all that mattered to him right now.

After Goku had calmed down some, Alex and Harl bandaged his arm before Sarla soon approached him again.

"Do you have any questions for me?" She wanted to know.

"Do you think… you could eventually have somebody play the role of a defense attorney, so I can… get a better idea of the sorts of things he'll be asking?" He requested.

"We can certainly do that." Sarla said. "Would you like to plan for a mock cross examination the next time you come here?"

"Yeah, if you could. I'm still really nervous about all this, so…" Goku gazed away. "I kinda wanna know what to expect."

"That's completely understandable." Sarla replied. "You know, though, in all the time I've been working here, I've never had somebody ask me to do something like that before. You're really brave."

This surprised Goku. He wasn't really sure how to respond other than nervously mentioning how much he wanted to be prepared again.

In the end, they agree to meet again in three weeks.

…

The said three weeks went by much faster than Goku would have liked.

This time, the process was similar although there was another man who introduced himself as Damian. He was supposed to be the one to play the defense attorney.

So once Sarla was done with her direct examination, Damian did his cross examination.

Naturally, Damian didn't have all the details about Goku's case, but he did do his best to replicate what a cross examination might look like based on what Goku said himself and stuff from his file. Goku somehow found that it was easier to reply to his questions than Sarla's.

"So when you laid down on the ground, the defendant approached you and offered to help you by letting you rest at his place for a while, correct?" Damian asked.

"Yeah… But he didn't mention anything about wanting sex." Goku replied.

"And at that time, did you happen to tell him that you were suicidal…?" Damian questioned.

"No… Although I did mention the argument I had had with my ex-wife, and what she said to me…" Goku murmured.

"Would you agree that you have a lot of thoughts that you don't always speak out loud?"

"Yeah, sometimes…" Goku admitted.

"So he wasn't aware that you were having thoughts about killing yourself then, right?"

"N-no. Probably not…" Goku gnawed at his lip.

"Okay. So when you arrived at his place, did you go straight to his bedroom?"

"Y-yeah. I was still feeling nauseated from the heat, so I just wanted to lay down."

"He then made you a sandwich and gave you a drink to help you feel better, is that correct?"

"Yeah."

"Did anything seem odd about the drink?"

"No, I don't think so…"

"You know the difference between right and wrong, right?" Damion asked.

"Yes…"

"And you said that he pressured you to smoke his pipe, the marijuana. He didn't *force* you to, correct?"

"...No. Although he did keep pushing it back at me even though I was choking."

"He didn't force you to take his medication, he just handed them to you, is that right…?"

"Well, I didn't really know what muscle relaxers were for. He mentioned something about stress relievers too, but… He just said they would help me feel better. I didn't think they would… do that to me…" Goku started twisting his hair again, a habit he'd recently picked up on, which Vegeta didn't like, but he couldn't help it. "I just figured they would help my stomach somehow. I guess there may have been some thought that it wasn't a good idea, but I wanted to trust him and I wasn't really thinking about it… He said he was a nice guy, so I wanted to give him the benefit of the doubt…"

"So…" Damion had to pause, looking over his notes briefly. "Between the time frame that you took the medication and before he pulled you into his arms and started kissing you, can you remember what your conversation looked like?"

"I can't… really remember a lot of it…, Except… sometime after he made me take the puffs of the… pot…, he asked me something about sex… which struck me as kind of odd, but I was already sort of out of it by then… I said that I… don't… usually enjoy sex unless I've known somebody for a long time and that even then it's… not something I like doing all the time… He told me that it was… because I hadn't been with the right person yet, that my ex-wife… probably didn't know how to make me feel good… Later on... after he started kissing me, he started touching me, he um… he

said that… I would… feel something when he was inside of me… and he thought that I wanted to do that… because I was erect… I… tried to explain that it was just my body's reaction… but he wouldn't listen…"

Upon hearing this, Vegeta was once again on the verge of going straight up to the jail house and killing the monster himself at this point. Keeping himself in a proper position, he clutched his arms, so tightly his knuckles were becoming white.

*What a sick **bastard** .*

*Sexuality and sex drive aren't things to be changed by **anybody** , and nor do they **need** to be…*

*Not a **single person** had the right to make that decision for him.*

"After he started putting his fingers inside of you, I know you said that he told you to relax your legs, but he didn't hold you down, did he?" Damian asked.

"He-actually, he did. Well sorta anyway. When he told me to relax my legs, he started pressing himself against me at some point so I couldn't move." Goku explained.

"Oh, in your record, it didn't say that he did." Damian had to take a moment to process the new information. "Did you have your phone on you at the time?"

"No."

"...That's all the questions I have." Damian finally said after mumbling something to himself, as if deep in thought.

In the end, everybody was proud of how well Goku had done, all things considered.

Even Damian said he had done well.

…

Over the course of the next few months, Goku continued coming back to prepare more.

The question of the man's DNA eventually got brought up, by Vegeta. To see if they had it.

Fortunately they did, and in that way, Goku was lucky, because in many cases it wasn't always possible to preserve DNA evidence from a sexual crime, especially depending on how much time had passed and other factors, like if one had drank fluids or showered after the assault. Not that DNA was always necessary for cases like these, but it could certainly help a lot. To avoid the possibility of the Defense Attorney outright denying it happened.

As it turned out, the man had also deleted a large portion of data from within a certain time frame, but fortunately, they had managed to recover bits and pieces of certain photos and videos. They even had records of his search history which included stuff about sexual assault and directions on how to permanently delete videos, which he had apparently failed at hiding.

Not only that but he had even searched up porn containing minors. Any guilt Goku might have felt over reporting him was gone after finding that out.

…

As it turned out, the charges Allan was currently being held for was Quasi Forcible Indecency: Quasi Rape.

Seeing the simple usage of the word *quasi* left a bitter taste in Vegeta's mouth, that it wasn't regarded as *actual* rape and would have a less severe punishment than such, primarily because Goku had been drugged and was nearly unconscious, which made no sense because realistically, that should have made it even *worse* .

Of course, the very fact that Goku was born male would have prevented Allan from being charged with *actual* rape in the first place, but Vegeta thought that was *also* bullshit.

If Vegeta had *his* way, he'd kill him to avoid the embarrassment of a trial all together and the prevent the risk of him getting out after a short amount of time, but he knew Goku's stance on this, so he had no choice but to comply. Still, in his own opinion, that *'law'* needed to be changed.

And yet this wasn't the prosecuting team's fault, they had no say so in that stuff, so there was no reason to take it out on them.

Vegeta watched from his seat as Goku went through yet another mock trial process, this time in front of a group of people who were supposed to be playing the role of the jury.

Goku was doing everything he could, and fighting against every bit of anxiety he had to go through with it. Despite that, it didn't stop him from hurting himself again.

Still, Vegeta was so proud of him; he had been encouraging every step of the way since the beginning of all of this.

That's what pushed Goku forward and made him feel like he could truly do this; what made him *want* to do this.

…

Alex made plans with Goku to buy him some clothes that he could wear in the week of the trial.

"You shouldn't have to buy your own court clothes." He had said. "That's why I'm here, to help you prepare for this and get you anything you may need. How do new clothes sound? Are you interested?"

"Yeah, who knows, this might actually be good for you, Kakarot." Vegeta added.

"You think? Well, I guess I could." Goku had an attachment to his gi despite not fighting anymore, but he knew Chichi would have expected him to wear something more proper for the occasion and

apparently these people did as well, so he decided to take him up on his offer.

…

Shopping for new clothes went by well enough, although Goku himself didn't have much of an opinion on most things. There were, however, certain outfits he rejected solely because he didn't like the texture or fabric of it or if he felt they were too constraining. But he made some decisions in the end.

Alex also took Goku out for a meal afterwards, not that he ended up eating much.

It was at this point that Goku was then given a subpoena to appear in court.

…

On the first day of the trial, Goku ended up putting on a white dress shirt, a black blazer and tie as well as some blue jeans.

"Those look good on you." Vegeta had his arms folded, standing at the bathroom door with a small smirk. He himself had on an unbuttoned yellow dress shirt with a white tank top, blue skinny jeans and black boots that matched the pendant Goku had given him, which, begrudgingly enough, he still continued to wear to this day. "If I didn't know any better, I'd almost think you were about to go to one of Bulma's business meetings or something."

"I feel ridiculous." Goku muttered, despite feeling flattered by what he could only assume was a compliment. "Chichi used to get me to wear these sort of things all the time for stuff at Gohan's school, Goten's too. I usually just prefer to wear my gi, though. It's easier to move around in."

"I know, but try to bear it. This will all be over before you know it." Vegeta reassured, approaching him.

"It sure doesn't feel like it." Goku muttered. "I feel like I'm going crazy."

"It's going to work out." He tried to comfort him as he had other times, recognizing just how stressed he was.

"I really hope you're right." Goku replied. "But what if all of this ends up being for nothing? I heard somewhere that only two percent of sex offenders like him are actually convicted in the end."

"Regardless," Vegeta breathed, some part of him understanding the concern, and trying his best to push past his own doubt for Goku's sake. He reached up and gently hugged Goku's neck. "you can't lose hope. You have to stay strong, no matter how fruitless it may seem. I won't allow you to just give up after we've come all this way. I'll be right here with you."

Goku smiled softly. "...You really are the best, Vegeta."

"The best?" Vegeta returned the gesture. "That's *my* line."

You're braver than I ever was.

"I love you…" Goku tightened his grip on the smaller man.

"...I love you too… Just remember your part, okay? What did I tell you before?" Vegeta moved back so he had his hands on Goku's shoulders, holding them tightly for security. He looked him in the eyes with an intense gaze.

"To tell the truth?" Goku responded after a moment.

"…That's right. That's all you have to do." Vegeta said.

"What if I mess up?" Goku murmured.

"You won't." Vegeta said.

"I'm afraid I'm going to forget stuff..."

"I told you before, as long as you can remember the majority of it, you'll be fine. Don't allow his lawyer to intimidate you. Don't allow *him* to intimidate you. If he tries *anything* , the police will stop him. And if they don't, then I ***will*** ." Vegeta vowed.

Goku was unsure, but he ended up nodding. "Okay."

After a moment, Vegeta kissed him. It was soft, but filled with the love and affection Goku so desperately needed and wanted right now.

…

The first day was just jury duty, so there wasn't a lot to be done on Goku's part. That being said, it wasn't any easier walking into the courtroom that morning.

He had to once again see the face of the man who had been haunting him in his nightmares for so long, the person who had destroyed him and his ability to trust in others. He was terrified. No matter how many times he had prepared for this day, he still wasn't sure how he would be able to handle himself, *if* he would be able to.

As they approached the court room, He quickly found himself unbuttoning his shirt slightly, and loosening his tie, as it suddenly felt more constraining than he'd have liked, especially knowing he'd have to wear such clothes all week.

"Don't worry. He's not there yet. We'll let you know when he comes in. Come on." Harl whispered before he and Alex led Goku into the room and over to his seat. They had gotten him some extra fidgets that he could play around with while he was there, including a fidget spinner.

Vegeta was already sitting in the seat behind him.

The two watched in silence as the people around them interacted. Goku bounced his leg up and down, and drummed his fingers on his knees, playing around with his fidgets, anything to avoid having another panic attack.

Briefly, Sarla introduced Goku to the defense attorney, a middle aged man named Berg. Berg didn't say much outside of a formal hello. He did offer to shake his hand, which Goku surprisingly found himself accepting, if only to be polite. Afterwards, the lawyer walked off again and Goku didn't pay him much mind.

Finally, Harl tapped on his shoulder. "Okay, he's coming in. He's allowed to wear normal clothes for this so you won't see him in prison attire."

Goku didn't respond but kept sparing glances at the doorway they said he would be coming in from. A minute later, ***that man*** - Allan - entered the room, sitting down next to Berg but surrounded by several cops.

Allan was a well-built man, but was a lot older looking than Goku had remembered. His hair had a slight tent of brown in it, although it was mostly gray now. Goku barely even recognized him.

Allan didn't look his way, so Goku was able to quickly turn his attention elsewhere.

Vegeta, however, took in every single detail about the man. He had to have been at least in his sixties. There were bags under his eyes and his face was starting to wrinkle slightly from age.

So that's the bastard who hurt Kakarot…? How repugnant.

No, his thought wasn't about his age, it was about the smug uncaring expression on his face. He gave the air of somebody who simply thought he was above consequences.

That being said, *at* such an age, he should have *known* better than to do what he did.

It would be better for everybody if I just put him down now. Obviously, he's not going to change.

Without even thinking, cold fury completely consumed his mind now that he was faced with seeing the man who had defiled his lover and the best friend had ever had. He started to get up, only one thing on his mind.

Revenge.

He wanted to murder the man who had caused Kakarot so much torment.

His scars.

His panic attacks.

The nightmares, all those times he woke up in the middle of the night crying and tore his body to pieces because he didn't know how else to deal with the pain.

The reason he keeps starving himself.

His fear of being touched, of being ***loved*** *.*

All of that was because of that **monster .**

...I'll make him ***suffer*** *for what he did…*

My Kakarot… I won't ever allow him to hurt you again.

Right as he got up and was about to started to walk off towards Allan, however, a hand grabbed his. It was Goku's, the man's grip more firm than ever.

At that moment, their eyes met.

"Let go of me."

It was one of those times that Vegeta had no choice but to use telepathy again.

"Don't do this, Vegeta..." Goku's eyebrows furrowed in response, already fully aware of what he was planning.

*"Why shouldn't I? He **hurt** you. And he's probably done it to others as well. Your prosecutor even said that, remember?"*

"I know that… But killing him isn't the answer…"

*"You're forgetting something… I'm not **like** you. All of this will be over if I just-"*

Vegeta started to resist, but Goku strengthened his grip even further.

" ***No, stop it, Vegeta, please.*** *"*

Upon hearing his plea and seeing the pain in Goku's eyes, Vegeta's breath hitched, a lump forming in his throat. He wanted nothing more than to do away with that man right then and there, at the very least hurt him, and break every bone in his body, but Goku didn't want that. Of *course* he didn't.

After a long time, the prince gritted his teeth to fight off the tears in his eyes before finally sitting back down.

Truthfully, he could use telepathy in that moment to speak to Allan if he had wanted to, to give him a threat that would knock the fear of death into him, but he begrudgingly chose not to. Kakarot would probably figure it out if he did.

…

Jury duty was extremely boring and the process dragged on for hours, as each person introduced themselves one by one, talking about their careers and confirming if their availability would be an issue. Sarla and Berg asked each individual questions, and various people they had to replace due to uncertainties about whether or not they would be able to be impartial when making their judgements. Most of the potential biases were based on the simple matter of this being a sexual assault case, but also other factors to be considered like not only Allan's age, but suicidality and mental health issues as well.

When lunch time came around, the jury made their exit, followed by Allan and Berg.

Alex and Harl then gave Goku the option to go to the break room to take an hour to himself. Alex chose to make an order for pizza so Goku would have something to eat.

Vegeta, meanwhile, ended up going to the room with Goku with the permission of Harl and Sarla. He sat down next to Goku on the couch, neither one of them saying much of anything at first.

"Thanks for earlier…" Goku mumbled after what felt like a long time. "For not trying to kill him, I mean…"

"Yeah, well… I probably would have if you hadn't stopped me… But… I highly doubt you would have forgiven me if I had, so… I didn't… want to risk what we've built… for that… I just… I can't forgive him for what he did to you, Kakarot… I *refuse* to." Vegeta clenched his knees. "Do you think I'm selfish for that…?"

"No…" Goku hesitantly grabbed his hand. "It's just cuz you care about me, so…"

Vegeta allowed himself to return the gesture, before slightly diverting the conversation.

"...How do you feel, anyways?" Vegeta asked. "You just saw the face of the man who raped you, so surely it must… *bother* you, right…?"

Goku looked down at the ground. He hadn't met Allan's eyes once today so was an answer to that even possible? "I'm not sure… It's kinda weird… Some part of me is still afraid of how it's going to turn out, but… another part of me is like… I… don't really care about it… about him. The more I looked at him, I… I don't know… I've spent all this time worried over seeing him again, yet now I barely feel anything… How does that even make any sense? Is it cuz I hardly recognize him or because he's much older than I remember? I just… don't know. Even when it was happening, I didn't… really look him in the eyes much… I couldn't…"

Vegeta listened to him ramble with some understanding of what he was saying. He himself could never feel such neutrality towards the faces of his own rapists, but victims could react any number of ways when they came back in contact with their assaulters after so much time, depending on the situation and who it was.

And yet, he could tell that, down deep, Goku was getting more upset about this than he wanted to let on, maybe even more than he realized himself.

"You were also drugged, so it's understandable that you don't recognize his face very well… And regardless of how you feel right now… It doesn't make your experience any less valid…" Vegeta said.

"To be honest, I'm more afraid of how I'll feel when I actually get up on the stand." Goku pondered it.

"I'm sure you'll do just fine…" Vegeta replied in a low voice, rubbing his thumb over Goku's hand.

"Thanks… " Goku leaned closer, a small blush rising to his cheeks. "Vegeta, I… I wanna… k-kiss you…"

"W-what, *right now* , you mean? But we're- Oh, *what the hell* …" Vegeta gave in almost immediately despite how sudden it seemed.

However, right as their lips were about to meet, Alex came into the room, holding the pizza.

Vegeta quickly pulled back before he saw anything. Goku was slightly upset by the interruption, but he didn't want to let it show.

Alex decided to leave the room afterwards so Goku could be alone with Vegeta, who didn't even hesitate to scarf down some slices for himself. Goku, on the other hand, didn't touch it.

They hadn't bothered explaining the situation to him.

"Are you not going to eat any…?" Vegeta asked.

"No, I don't… think I can stomach it right now." Goku said after a long moment.

Vegeta frowned a bit, trying to think of what to do. In the end, he knew he couldn't force him, so he decided not to push it, instead just opting to eat a couple more slices for himself before closing the box. "I'll just leave the rest here in case you decide you want some later. Tomorrow, we'll bring something different that you can actually handle."

"Okay." Goku's response was barely above a whisper.

In that moment, Vegeta hoped more than anything that this whole fiasco would be resolved by the end of the week and that Allan would be locked away.

…

The rest of jury duty still continued to drag on and was actually post poned to go into Tuesday morning.

Tuesday, however, was also the day that Goku had to speak on the stand.

"You only have to do one thing. Just tell the truth."

Both Sarla and Vegeta had told him this. He had practiced for it multiple times. But it didn't stop him from being stressed out.

That morning, Goku ended up having another relapse again and he wound up with a box cutter like before. But this time, after creating several slashes in his wrist, he lost his nerve. Vegeta had told him to call for him, had pled for him to ask for help so many times.

So that's what he did.

"Vegeta…? I need help…" He cried out.

"What is it? What's wrong?" Vegeta wasted no time bursting in the in through the bathroom door. He rushed over as soon as he saw the blood and what Goku had in his hand. "Kakarot…"

He took the box cutter away immediately, Goku making no attempt to stop him.

"I'm sorry. I messed up again." Goku murmured.

"It's alright now." Vegeta didn't fuss at him. Instead, he just sat beside him and pulled his lover into his arms. He hugged him and practically smothered him in kisses, for what felt like hours, as if his life depended on it, because it some ways it *did* . After all, Goku was depending on *him* to guide him through this, and he couldn't be prouder that Goku called for him this time. "Do you want to talk about it? If not, I'll just stay here, until you're feeling better…"

He knew he asked that question a lot, but it was necessary all the same, no matter many times this happened.

"...What if he gets away with it…? What if his lawyer says that I consented and they believe him? I'm so scared right now…"

"It's going to be okay." The prince said to him, trying his best to offer reassurance and comfort, the kind that he actually needed. "All of this will soon be over."

But they both knew that what he said wasn't entirely true. It never was. The memories would still continue to haunt him. Trauma like this didn't just go away, but it would at least fade over time and become more manageable. It already had somewhat.

…

Sarla's opening statement rehashed all sorts of feelings Goku had been trying to forget.

"He lured him to his apartment, gave him his prescription drug pills, and after Goku was hardly even responsive, the defendant proceeded to strip him, and *sodomized* him, both anally, and orally, for *four hours*. Goku, at this time, he had just divorced his wife, and was still having an incredibly hard time dealing with the arguments that still often arose between them. He left his house that day with plans to commit suicide. Goku was emotional. He was vulnerable, and he was in pain. The defendant saw this and he took advantage of that. He took advantage of his trusting nature. He drugged him, and then *assaulted* him, over and over and over again."

Goku didn't know why, but as she had started talking, he suddenly pulled himself into his shirt, as if he were ashamed, wanting more than anything to hide his face from the eyes around him, people in the jury and others.

His shoulders shook, his breath hitching as he failed to stop the tears from falling his face, stifled sobs escaping his lips one by one. He felt so small, and the court room felt even smaller.

Everybody in there knew. They were judging him. They had to be.

"It's okay… All of this is on him. Nobody else." Vegeta whispered, embracing him from behind. His hold on him was firm yet comforting. Goku melted in his warmth, but was still shaking.

Goku had no response. He could feel Vegeta's heartbeat against his back which was pounding in his chest a mile a minute.

Unlike Sarla, Berg chose not to do an opening statement.

Krillin was one of the first ones to be called to the stand, but, due to how stressed out Goku was getting, Alex and Harl suggested he step outside for a while, so he ended up missing what was said.

It was probably for the best. Goku hadn't even wanted ones like Chichi or Bulma coming, so he had asked them not to. There was something uncomfortable about the idea of this stuff being talked about in front of or by too many familiar faces. It made him feel vulnerable and he didn't like that. Vegeta was the rare exception. The one person that he actually *wanted* to be in there with him. The one who had been by his side throughout every step of the way.

In many cases, the defense attorney was allowed to stop witnesses from talking with other witnesses or seeing what was being said, to keep their testimony uninfluenced, so in some ways he was lucky that Vegeta had been permitted to be in the room with him.

Goku couldn't be more grateful for that.

…

When Goku came back in, Fran went up to testify.

Goku had apparently been a bit more out of it than he had remembered because she had a video recording from that night. His voice in it was groggy and noticeably slurred, at least compared to how he usually was.

Fran testified that his behavior that night was very different from all the other times she had spoken with him and confirmed that she could tell that he was under the influence of something. There were certain parts of their conversation he just hadn't even remembered. In fact, as it turned out, him not responding much was exactly *why* she chose to wait until some days later to interview him.

Vegeta had certainly noticed it from fairly early on, but hadn't bothered commenting on it. Overall, he had been far more concerned about the rape, suicidal thoughts and the self-harm at the time.

Whatever the defense attorney asked Fran, Goku tuned this part out. He was too overwhelmed to fully concentrate and some of the conversations between the attorneys and the witnesses were

boring to listen to, he didn't even understand some of the things they were talking about, and there were so many words he didn't recognize.

He just wanted this to be over.

…

Once Fran was done being cross examined by Berg, everybody was dismissed for lunch, Goku was told he'd have to go up afterwards.

Alex bought burgers, but Goku refused to touch them. Vegeta had fortunately thought to bring soup and a protein shake with him, though, so, thankfully, Goku did at least eat a few bites of something this time even if it wasn't a lot.

Vegeta did everything he could to offer him reassurance again, to tell him that it was going to work out. But some part of him suddenly wondered if he was saying that for himself or for Goku.

…

When Goku finally took to the stand, he found that he was surprisingly calmer than expected. He was still nervous, of course, but Sarla was understanding.

Most of the questions she asked were the same ones she always did, the ones he had practiced with, before she finally finished her direct examination off with, "How has this trauma affected you?"

"I'm… afraid of… being taken advantage of again, so… even… with the person that I like, I-It scares me…" Goku trailed off after that, not wanting to say anymore. How was he supposed to put that into words?

There were so many other things he failed to mention. Like nightmares and the self-harm. He was too upset to think of it at the moment.

…

After Sarla was done, Berg took his turn on asking Goku questions.

Fortunately, he wasn't rude.

There was even a point where Goku got super stressed and Berg told him, "I know this is hard for you to talk about, so you don't have to go through the whole story…" which actually surprised a lot of people.

Although he was briefly scolded by the judge to keep things at specifically yes or no questions, he only really asked a few.

"You've said before that you've done a lot fieldwork, correct? Growing vegetables and picking weeds, mowing the lawn, etc, yes?"

"Yeah, I had to sometimes, for my family." Goku said.

"So you are capable of holding up a job if you try to, right?"

"Y-yeah."

"And you're a martial artist too, correct? Like you've been trained to defend yourself if somebody were to try to hurt you?"

"That's…" Even if he had been drugged, Goku felt a pang of guilt and self doubt with that one. He couldn't deny it. "Yes…"

"When he gave you the sandwich, do you recall him kissing you on the hand?"

"I…" Goku paused, his ears heating up out of humiliation, feeling a bit guilty that he had forgotten. Some part of him wanted to deny it, deny how *stupid* he had been, but he couldn't bring himself to now that it was brought up. He did *now* . And he had mentioned it once before, in his interview with Fran. "Vaguely? I remember something about it, but… I thought he was just being friendly, at least that's what I wanted to believe, anyway. I mean… Isn't that something… *anybody* can do? I don't know… I don't really understand those things…"

"Do you remember helping him untie your obi?" That too was something Goku had forgotten to mention in Sarla's direct examination, but Berg didn't hesitate to ask about it.

"Yeah um…" Goku rubbed harshly at the bandage on his wrist, reopening it and some of the cuts, causing blood to seep out. "He started snapping at me and told me to untie it, so I did… Even though I was uncomfortable with it."

Berg mumbled something to himself, before finally replying, "That's all the questions I have…"

…

Vegeta was called to testify next.

Most of the first questions had ended up being about Goku's behavior the day of the assault and the side effects of the drugs.

But then it got into some more personal matters.

"In all the time that you've been with Goku, would you agree that he often tends to confuse romantic and sexual gestures with that of somebody being friendly? Or that he has trouble picking up on certain social cues that others would have no trouble recognizing?"

"Yes, I would actually." Vegeta said. "He doesn't… perceive those things in the same way others do. Somebody could be flirting with him and he wouldn't even realize it. That's why, if he heard, *"you can come rest in my bed",* he would assume it to be exactly what he said, rather than an invitation for sex. Even if somebody kissed him on the hand, that too might be perceived as, as you put it, a simple matter of being friendly, unless it were with a romantic partner like myself."

"I've noticed before in some of the interviews that Goku has expressed some uncertainties about his abilities to stand up to people when in a situation like that. If somebody was making advances on him that he wasn't comfortable with, do you think he would be the type to fight back?"

"No, I don't…" Vegeta trailed off for a moment. "From what I know of him, he usually freezes up and shuts down when he's in a situation that he's uncomfortable with regarding intimacy. He might say something, but if they ignored him, chances are he'd be more likely to hurt himself before he even *thought* of lashing out at another over it."

"You were aware of the strained relationship between him and his ex-wife Chichi, right?"

"Yes."

"Can you tell me a little bit about that?"

"It… wasn't healthy… It still isn't…" Vegeta hesitated. "When they're… around each other for too long, they often get into arguments, over just about anything. She yells at him and sometimes…, he retaliates by yelling back… But he doesn't deal with conflicts like that very well, so he broke it off."

"....And how would you say he was coping with that? The divorce, I mean? Or did you notice anything?"

Vegeta reflected on it, trying to give the best answer he could provide. "He'd… often come to my place to get away from it all, so I could tell it bothered him, but he isn't really the type of person who would talk much about what he's feeling. If he was suicidal, he'd bottle it up then act on it in the spur of the moment. He did the same thing in the past." Of course the last statement was vague, but Goku knew what he was referring to, that he still regarded what Goku did after Cell to be suicide. Because he could have come back but chose not to. He *chose* to stay dead. And Vegeta wasn't wrong about him bottling things up either.

He had thought about those things for a while. His sacrifice against Cell just happened to make that possible. The perfect opportunity.

"How do you think this experience has affected him?"

Vegeta had a mouthful for this answer.

"He has scars that will *never go away*, nightmares that wake him up and haunt him at night. I *worry, constantly* that he's going to take his own life, because he's told me before that he wanted to die. And he's… always afraid of being taken advantage of, of… having sex… Always questioning mine and everybody else's motives and talking bad about himself. He even has to take medication now because of this, and the self-harm… the nightmares… even the panic attacks… I will *never* forgive that *monster* for what he did to him… Kakarot was *innocent* and ***bastard*** *destroyed* him. I don't think he'll *ever* completely heal from this…"

Vegeta found himself crying yet again, in front of everybody. His voice was mixed with anger, frustration, helplessness, sadness and everything else in between.

After that, Sarla then handed it over to Berg, who chose not to question him.

…

Sarla, Harl and Alex praised Goku and thanked Vegeta for being a part of it, but it almost didn't feel real to Goku, that what he had been dreading for months was finally over for his part.

That night, even as Vegeta told him how well he had done ***yet again*** , kissing him everywhere he saw skin, Goku had a really hard time accepting his words, thinking constantly about the ways in which he had messed up, and all the things he had either forgotten to say, or things he could have done better.

…

Something that Goku hadn't even realized until it was brought up by Sarla was that Allan was apparently a counselor, which added an certain level of horror to the situation since he had probably picked up on the fact that Goku was vulnerable right from the beginning and intentionally took advantage of it.

"She told you to kill yourself? What a bitch… I swear, this is a fucked up world. Fucked up people. I have a counseling degree, if you ever need to talk to somebody."

It was shortly after making that discovery that he recalled Allan's words to him. Words that Goku had forgotten, but Allan had only said to gain his trust; to manipulate him.

It hurt, because Goku had *wanted* to trust him, without even recognizing the danger of the situation he was putting himself into.

In the end, it was this very revelation that brought back Goku's distrust of doctors all over again.

…

Over the course of the next couple days, there were others who came up on the stand, ranging from DNA analysts, the nurse who had taken his rape kit, as well as people who worked with hair and even other stuff like data from phones, and some guy who knew how to clear up audio.

His blood and urine samples were brought up too, which provided proof that he had been given four different types of medication. Only one was still in his bloodstream, one that he recognized. It was Desyrel or another name for it being Trazodone. The others, meanwhile, showed up in his urine as Quetiapine, Fioricet, and Doxipine. Two of the medications were listed on the prescription bottles as they weren't even being supposed to be taken together.

Goku only realized then that his suspicions had been right. Trazodone was the first medication he had been put on a while back. It was also one of the medications that Allan had given him. A sleep medication.

…

That evening Goku was told to decide if he wanted to see the videos the next day.

Goku didn't have the answer to that. Did he want to relive it? Did he want to be in the same room as people as they listened to him being taken advantage of, see how vulnerable and weak he had been?

He wasn't sure, but some part of him didn't like not knowing, or straight up having chunks of his memories gone.

Vegeta didn't *want* him to relive that. In his eyes, there was no reason for Goku to have to go through that again. But at the same time, he wasn't sure what the appropriate response to such a situation was, so he left the decision up to Goku for the time being. And to be fair, Goku himself never *asked* him what he thought so he wasn't put into such a position of advising him against it.

…

On Friday, they were to play the videos from Allan's phone for the Jury.

Goku had been asked by Harl if he wanted to come into the courtroom or stay in the backroom while they were being played.

Because Goku still hadn't made a decision, Harl told him he'd come get him later, to stay with Alex and that he could see the video later in private. He, of course, didn't realize that they were lying to him, so he chose to stay for what felt like hours, during which he actually ended up falling asleep in the process of waiting.

It wasn't until after the videos had been played that they came back to get him and told him the truth.

When Goku was brought back to the courtroom, he kept his head bowed. He was ashamed. Disgusted in himself. He knew they were as well. They had seen it. They knew now just how weak he was.

Vegeta was disgusted, yes. He was sick to his stomach. But not at Kakarot. *Never* at Kakarot.

At that man- no, that ***filthy scum*** who dared call himself a human being.

Vegeta refused to believe he *was* one. No actual person could be that twisted.

The things he said, and the things he *did* were on a level of depravity that Vegeta had only seen from a select few individuals throughout his life, all others *paling* in comparison.

Goku's voice had been so weak and barely audible, he was even crying, telling him that it hurt, yet that *snake* hadn't had the slightest shred of remorse and even mocked him.

His lover had been *hurt,* so so ***badly***, and treated like an animal, a play thing, a mere *sex object* that had had his free will ***torn*** from him, his pride *trampled* on.

The prince of all Saiyans was *livid* .

*His screams of pain. His tears… I can only imagine how **scared** he must have been. Wanting somebody to stop it, but too afraid to call out. He could have been killed.*

*That bastard could have **killed** him…*

Fingernails were embedded in his arms as he just barely maintained his cool.

Despite the bile rising to his throat and the tears in his eyes, he told himself he had to remain strong. He *had* to, for Kakarot.

…

When Sarla concluded her case and all the witnesses she had. It was up to Berg to put forth *his* witnesses.

Except he had none, at least none that chose to testify in the end.

Allan was given the option to, but chose not to.

Vegeta was revolted by the simple fact that after everything Allan had done, he was too much of a coward to say even anything or face the prosecutor, but defendants were usually encouraged not to testify and had no obligation to, so he supposed it couldn't be helped.

Not that the bastard even *had* a case. Ever since the videos were played, he had been noticing certain members of the jury and others in the room sending Allan disgusted looks.

They knew.

They all did.

…

At long last, with all the evidence now given to the jury, Sarla went through with her closing statement, which was very similar to her opening one, the only difference being that she added details on the proof they had and why Allan's actions should be considered to follow under the charges he was accused of.

Next up was Berg, who hadn't had an opening statement. Goku could feel his heart pounding in his chest as he began.

He started off by saying that Goku seemed like a smart person, capable of making decisions for himself, capable of holding up a job, therefore by that logic, capable of picking up on other people's intentions and knowing what he was doing when he chose to follow Allan, chose to take his pills and drugs, and chose to be there. He even said that because Goku was a martial artist, he should have been able to fight back and defend himself if he wanted to.

He made an effort to point out the fact that Allan had no way of knowing that Goku was suicidal, then even proceeded to turn it on him to say that there wasn't enough evidence to prove that it wasn't consentual, that Goku had lied about it being rape.

Goku began to lock up at the statement.

"Why would he make it up? I don't know. People have a lot of reasons to do something like that. But consider this. His ex wife, you've all heard about her by now from both Mr. Son himself and even the cop who has known him since they were children. From what we've heard, she doesn't really seem like a very pleasant woman, and I'm sorry that he has had to deal with that. Nobody should be told to commit suicide or verbally abused in such a way. But where does that come into play here? I have a theory on that. As we all know by now, Mr. Son had just had a huge argument with her, one that left him so hurt that he even considered taking his life, but for some reason or another he chose not to. He sits down on the ground and then the defendant, Mr. Allan, approaches him. Mr. Allan hears that Mr. Son doesn't feel comfortable returning to his own home, and feels bad to hear what he's been through, and out of the kindness of his heart, he offers him a bed to lay in, feeds him and gives him a drink. Him and Mr. Son smoke pot together. Mr. Son is feeling lonely because he is still hurting over the divorce with his ex-wife and the arguments they had. As such, he seeks comfort in another man, and chooses to have sex with him to fill a certain void left behind from his divorce."

"None of this shit he's spouting is true, and everybody here knows that. Ignore him." Vegeta could see Goku trembling from his anxiety.

"What better way to gain his ex-wife's sympathy and to get her off his back than to claim he was raped?" Berg continued.

Goku had started digging into his scalp to the point it was drawing blood. Alex and Harl saw this and was about to intervene, but Vegeta beat them to it.

"Kakarot, stop that. You can't hurt yourself. Use one of your fidgets… Listen… *Everything he's saying is wrong.*" His eyebrows furrowed. *"That man is lying because he has to come up with* ***something****. He* ***has*** *to because it's his* ***job*** *to defend that bastard, but I highly doubt that even he believes the words coming out of his own mouth…"*

"That doesn't mean I condone the *language* Mr. Allan used, no." Berg said.. "But this trial isn't *about* his language. Understand that these are very serious charges that will follow him for the rest of his life no matter where he goes. In the videos, we never heard Mr. Son say no. He said he wasn't comfortable, that he didn't *think* he wanted to do it. To do what? That could mean many things. He willingly followed him to his apartment, he consented to smoking marijuana with him, he consented to taking the pills he was given, Mr. Allan certainly didn't force him to do any of this. Everything Mr. Allan told him to do, he did it, willingly. Mr. Son consented to being there. And he consented to having sex with him."

Vegeta kept Goku's hands and fingers tight in his grip, gritting his teeth as Berg continued to give his case. The lawyer went into some more bullshit reasons as to why the videos weren't enough proof of it being nonconsensual, that there were missing parts, changing the context of Goku's words and even lying about Goku's tone and mannerisms when they had been blatantly obvious that he wasn't enjoying what was happening to him; when it was obvious that he was barely conscious at points.

In the end, his argument was that it was two consenting adults, who knew exactly what they were doing and that Goku was the bad one for using his good will against him.

How somebody could pull something like that out of their ass after all the evidence they had seen put forward was beyond Vegeta.

After Berg went into the definition of quasi forcible indecency and tried to find a way to alter it to his own benefit, he finally concluded his closing statement.

The jury was then sent to a backroom to conclude their decision.

Goku sat in his seat, more anxious than ever. He was no longer clawing into his head, but Vegeta had chosen to embrace him as he had so many other times that week.

"You're so amazing, Kakarot. You stood your ground and pressed forward no matter what happened. I'm so proud of you."

Vegeta *was* proud of Goku and he would say that as many times as he had to.

But Allan was another matter entirely. Vegeta already had it in his mind that if this *didn't* work out, then he would kill the piece of shit without hesitation.

It took about thirty minutes before a unanimous decision was made.

They had found him guilty and were soon sent out of the courtroom, given permission to now speak to one another about the case and whatever else.

The judge then gave Allan a sentence.

That sentence was ten years. *Ten years* for a crime that would have likely received a much *longer* sentence had Goku, one, not been drugged and two, if he had been female. (Yet, even then, many of *those* cases didn't always go to trial, succeed in the end *or* get a good sentence *either* , because the justice system was flawed.)

Berg attempted to get that sentence reduced even further by bringing up Allan's age and saying he had never done anything like this before, that his record prior to this was clean.

Sarla interjected, stating that Allan had completely denied knowing Goku three times until he found out they had his DNA. She went on to explain that he also had recordings on his computer of other victims. In one of the videos was a woman even, one who was naked and completely unconscious as he was pinching her nipples.

After this, the judge kept his sentence and stated that Allan was to never approach Goku or his family or make any attempt to contact them ever again.

When everything was over, the judge spoke to Goku briefly and said only one thing:

"Mr. Son, I want you to know that was very brave of you."

Goku could only smile sheepishly in response.

One of the bailiffs had even said that Goku was a hero, but Goku didn't really feel that way considering that Allan would get out in ten years and could continue doing what he wanted. Whether this went down on his permanent record or not wouldn't change that.

…

As a reward for making it through the trial, Alex bought Goku tacos this time. Goku ate a few bites of one but discarded the rest. There were a lot of other tacos left over which he gave to Vegeta and said Trunks and Bulma could have them if they wanted them.

Goku then proceeded to ask Sarla if he could look at the videos or the video transcript after all, but, much to Vegeta's relief, she said no because the stuff had already been put into evidence.

Whether that was entirely the truth or if they were just trying to protect him, Vegeta didn't know, but in this case, he found a lie preferable to him seeing or hearing those videos.

…

Krillin finding out about the sentence was to be expected, considering his position. Bulma found out through Vegeta. Chichi and Goten found out through her.

Goku, on the other hand, had been staying in Vegeta's bedroom constantly. All he wanted to do was sleep anymore and the medication hadn't been helping his fatigue, but it beat having the panic attacks and nightmares all the time, so he couldn't complain too much.

…

Krillin tried to come and check up on Goku. He wanted to see how he had been doing because it had been so long.

But when he knocked on their bedroom door, however, he was surprised to find that it was Vegeta who stepped out.

"What do you want?" Vegeta asked, after exiting the bedroom and closing the door behind him. He folded his arms, leaning against the wall.

"Well, I-I came to see how Goku's doing. Do you mind if I speak to him for a few minutes? It won't be long." Krillin said.

"I'm sorry. He says he doesn't want any visitors right now, so you'll have to come back some other time." Vegeta replied simply.

"Ah… I see." Krillin looked away. "He hasn't been responding to any of my messages, so I've been really worried about him… How is he… feeling?"

"He's been… He's not… doing well…" Vegeta finally struggled to admit.

"So is he… still having those thoughts, then? The ones of suicide?" Krillin wanted to know.

"Yeah." Vegeta confirmed in a low voice.

"And… the self-harm?" Krillin pressed with unease.

"Yeah." Vegeta repeated. "He's on… medication now, though, so the nightmares are at least somewhat manageable..."

"Well, that's one positive, I guess…" Krillin pondered it. "Just… let him know I said I miss him, would you…?"

"Right…" Vegeta looked away Krillin soon dismissed himself and walked off. He let out a sigh before entering the bedroom again.

Goku was on the bed with his arm hanging off the side of the mattress, piecing together a puzzle which was on the floor. "Is Krillin gone…?"

"Yeah..." Vegeta sat down next to him in the bed, playing with his hair. "He's really worried about you…"

"I know… I saw all the messages he sent me." Goku reflected, putting in one of the corner pieces to the puzzle.

"You should talk to him… and some of the others as well." Vegeta suggested.

"I dunno what to say, especially since it's been so long. I still need some more time." Goku said.

"I understand…" Vegeta pondered it.

"On the last day of the trial…" Goku started again after a while. "The detective… She told me something… She said that… If I hadn't thrown up when I did… then I might have been knocked unconscious… like the woman from the video they mentioned was. I mean… some part of me already knew that, but… still… He could have killed me…"

That had been gathered more than once, but the severity of the matter wasn't something to scoff at or take lightly.

"Maybe, but it's best not to think about those things too much…" Vegeta said. "They'll just upset you… What's important is that you're safe now, right…?"

"Yeah…" Goku uttered in response. "But in ten years, he'll get out again… It's not fair..."

"No, it's *not.* It's complete bullshit… The system needs to be changed. Still… When he *does* get out, if he ever starts causing you trouble again, just let me know and I'll be sure to deal with him myself…" Vegeta mumbled.

"I wanna move…" Goku buried his face in his arms. "Somewhere far away from here."

"What, you mean like another planet or something?" Vegeta seemed a bit confused.

"No, not that far…" Goku said. "Just… Another city or something."

"I see…" Vegeta pondered it. "Well, whatever you decide, Kakarot, I'll support you. I'll even have Bulma help find us a place. We can go where you want."

"What about your gravity chamber, though?" Goku asked.

"I'll have her make me a new one." Vegeta said.

"Another capsule, then?" Goku turned around, looking up at him.

"Yeah. Something like that. She can make repairs on it when I come back to visit." Vegeta said. "For now, though, I think you should focus more on getting better. I want you to start training again too… But only when you're ready to. That decision is yours to make, nobody else's..."

"Hey, I've been thinking…" Goku murmured.

"About what…?" Vegeta glanced over at him.

"I'd… like to go back to Lord Beerus's world if possible…" Goku said.

"...Kakarot." Vegeta wasn't entirely sure what to say to that. "Are you… really sure that's a good idea? I mean, you still don't even have a therapist yet."

"So what? I don't *need* one. The medication is helping me just fine. Besides, if something happens and I get upset again, I can just talk to you or…" Goku clearly wanted to say something but for whatever reason he stopped.

Vegeta begged to differ, able to tell that Goku still had many unresolved issues that he didn't want to confront or talk about. He sighed, knowing he wasn't going to get him to finish that sentence, and nor could he sway him. Seeking out therapy needed to be something Goku decided for himself. "Alright, if this is really what you want… then I won't stop you…"

"Thanks…" was all Goku said.

…

The next time Whis came out, Bulma ended up taking him out for lunch again.

Goku sat in a nearby chair, one that he had been told to sit in by Vegeta. He wasn't all there. He ignored his surroundings. Anxious. Depressed. So many different emotions under the sun.

Fear of judgment.

Because the last time he had been there, he caused Whis a whole lot of trouble and possibly almost died.

Vegeta said something, but he wasn't paying attention. In all honesty, he felt like crap. And the one thing that had been dragging him down the most was the fact that, even to this day, there were still gaps in his memories, things he didn't even remember. Things he would probably *never* remember.

He'd lost that chance after they locked away the evidence.

…That's when it hit him.

Whis had *powers* . He could **show** him. Or bring back his memory. Everything he had forgotten. Everything that was said and done to him. Everything he *himself* did.

I have to know.

…

"Are you boys ready?" Whis asked sometime later, holding a carry-out box. Fortunately, Bulma had been kind enough to supply him with enough food to share with Beerus as well so Goku and Vegeta wouldn't have to come up with something.

"You mean we can finally go now?" Goku asked, excitedly, before Vegeta even had a chance to respond.

Whis smiled. "Mhm."

As Goku grabbed hold of Whis, the angel then spared Vegeta an unreadable glance. "Are you coming, Vegeta?"

"...Y-yeah…" Vegeta said, approaching him and doing the same as Goku had, placing a hand on Whis's shoulder.

"Hold tight now." It was only a second later before Whis warped off.

…

A day later, and Goku still hadn't asked Whis about showing him what happened. He didn't really know how to broach it or ask about it. Did Whis really have such a power? He *should* , shouldn't he?

"Goku, I believe I just asked you a question. Don't make me repeat myself."

"H-huh?" Goku looked up to see Beerus staring at him with curious but expectant eyes. "Sorry, I kinda got distracted there for a moment, uh…"

"I asked how you've been doing." Beerus gave in and asked again anyway.

"I'm… okay, I guess. It's just… Ever since the trial, I haven't really been feeling all that great…" Goku paused, gaining a look from Vegeta. "Actually… Whis…? There's kind of a favor I have to

ask of you."

"What is it, Goku?" Whis asked handing him a bowl and a spoon, which the Saiyan took after a moment.

"I… want you to show me… what happened between me and that man… The one who raped me." Goku said.

A stiffening silence settled between everybody in the room as those words left his mouth. Even Beerus seemed taken aback.

"Kakarot…" Vegeta had to take some time to process what Goku had just requested of Whis. He looked away, mumbling a response. "Listen to me… The things that monster did to you…. and said... There's no reason whatsoever that you should have to go through that again… *Any* of it."

Goku was just *barely* starting to move forward. If he were to relive that trauma, there was no *telling* what he might do. Vegeta refused to take the chance of another relapse.

"...I can't *stand* this… Even now, there are still so many gaps in my memories, things I can't remember." Goku felt tears well up in his eyes. "I need to know…"

"I have to agree with Vegeta on this one, Goku." Whis admitted. "Although I won't stop you, since it *is* your body and all, but-"

"You're not to show him *anything* , Whis." Beerus sharply interjected.

"...But why *not* ?" Goku looked genuinely upset by this.

"*Because*... Knowing everything that happened may very *destroy* you. Can't you tell? It already *has*." Beerus's eyes narrowed, before grabbing Goku's wrist and pulling off his wrist cuff to reveal some fresh cuts that not even Vegeta himself had even been aware of before now. "Your body is covered in *hundreds* of scars and cuts like this that *you* created because ***you couldn't handle it***."

"Still, I have a right to-" Goku started to argue back, which was so rare for him, especially against somebody like Beerus, but it was proof of the pain that he was in. At the same time, he was playing with fire due to the simple fact that Beerus was a destroyer god.

"Stop this *right now, Kakarot.* " Vegeta snapped sternly, causing Goku to tense up.

Goku was quiet for a moment before lowering his head. "...I'm sorry, Lord Beerus…"

Much to Vegeta's relief, Beerus sighed, letting go of his hand. "...Yeah, whatever. Just eat your soup, already. And Whis? I want you to heal his arm."

Goku had no response when he was handed back his wrist cuff.

"Yes, My Lord." Whis replied simply, approaching the Saiyan and doing as told.

When Whis took Goku's hand, Goku turned away, guilt passing over his face as his wounds disappeared.

Whis then leaned down towards Goku, catching Vegeta's attention as he whispered something into his ear. "Just so you know... Lord Beerus didn't say what he said just now to be mean. He was trying to protect you. And if I'm being honest about it, I don't really think that's something you need to see either."

At hearing that, Goku's expression softened.

Once Whis had returned to his seat, Vegeta almost wanted to ask Goku what the angel had said to him, as he didn't particularly like people acting all secretive around with his partner, but, in the end, he decided it was probably nothing.

"Here…" He picked up the wrist cuff that Goku had put aside, gently slipping it back on the man's wrist.

"Thanks…" Goku responded.

Vegeta observed him with some hesitation. *"Hey… Are you going to be alright?"*

Goku looked down at the armband that was covering his arm again. *"...Yeah… I'm okay now. Don't worry about it."*

Vegeta couldn't help it. With Goku, he *had* to worry. He *always* had to.

Still, he felt a wave of relief pass over him when he actually saw him eat.

He almost hadn't expected him to after what had happened.

…

"Lord Beerus got super mad at me earlier…" Goku said that night as they laid in bed. "I kinda feel bad now."

Vegeta, who had his back to Goku, responded. "He shouldn't have grabbed your arm like he did, but I'm sure he had his reasons for not wanting you to see that stuff, just as I do."

"...Whis said that he was trying to protect me…" Goku said. "I don't like making people worry about me so much. Chichi used to a lot as well… She still does sometimes… Just like you do…"

Another pause. Vegeta was quiet.

"I wanna get better and I'm really trying to…" Goku rubbed his wrist. "But it feels like no matter what I do, there's always something that sets me back somehow. A lot of stuff that I don't talk about with others… I feel like I'd just be a burden."

"I don't know what the others think, but you're not a burden to me, so don't say that…" Vegeta mumbled. "If you want to talk, then talk, already…"

"...I still haven't… forgotten what happened at the festival, with that guy. The one who groped me… and tried to pressure me to go with him. Every time… somebody touches me there now, I freeze up. I dunno if it's my tail scar causing it, the trauma, or just because I'm… as stupid as people say I am… but I'm always afraid of going through another situation like that… You guys were there that time to stop him… But… what if you're not in the future… and I go off with somebody after all… like what happened with ***him*** …" Even now, he still refused to speak that man's name. "I don't… want to go places anymore. Yet even at capsule corp, some of the staff there hate me, and they always give me strange looks. I guess it's because I like men… That's why that one woman got so angry at me, she called me something… I think it was… 'queer'? I imagine it must mean something like 'faggot' does…"

Vegeta's gut wrenched when he heard him use the word faggot so flippantly. He had tried to keep him from knowing but somehow he had figured it out anyway.

"A lot of people think I'm an easy target for saying that stuff to… and I guess it's true, that I don't always stand up for myself when people are saying mean things about me… but it does… hurt sometimes… I try not to let it get me down, but… it's super hard, ya know…?" Goku had to stop when he realized he had started scratching himself. "Sometimes… I even think about Raditz too… and how he lied to me… That I was naive enough to trust him… Just like I've trusted so many others and got hurt because of it. I even let down my guard around Frieza as well, multiple times… I'm starting… to think… that maybe I should get therapy, after all. Maybe then… people wouldn't have so many issues with me all the time."

"Now what do you mean by *issues* with you…?" Vegeta turned back around and sitting up slightly, anchoring himself on his elbow. "Maybe it's true that you've made mistakes before, sure, but you're not crazy… or insane or anything like that. You just need some help, because you're in pain. That's *all* …"

"You know… That man… he was also a therapist… That's what they said… That's what *he* said too. That I could… talk to him..." Goku clutched at the fabric of the bed, trying to calm his nerves.

"Not all doctors are *like* him, though." Vegeta argued weakly.

"I know… I'm just… I'm afraid of being judged… There are so many things they wouldn't understand about me." Goku looked down, uncertainty passing over his face. "I mean… I'm not even human… If they hear I used to be able to transform into some giant ape and killed my grandpa, they'd be terrified. Or they wouldn't take me seriously anymore."

As much as Vegeta hated to admit it, he had a point.

"...We'll… figure it out. For now, I just want you to get some rest…" Vegeta twirled Goku's hair in his fingers. "Deal?"

"Alright..." Goku nodded. "Good night."

Vegeta moved the hair aside and kissed him on the forehead, causing Goku to become as red as a tomato.

"Yeah… I…" Vegeta lowered his voice, suddenly feeling shy. "I love you…"

Goku's eyes widened slightly, but then he reached out, hugging him tightly to show just how grateful he was to him. "I love you too, Vegeta…"

Another silence.

"You know… You keep… telling me to rely on you, but… when it comes to your own pain, you never really talk about that stuff with anyone. It kinda worries me sometimes…" Goku considered his words for a moment. "Even if our experiences are different in some ways… What happened to you… It also happened to me as well… at least on some level, and… I get it… Still… I've realized… that it does… help some, to talk about it, so…"

"...Those memories…" Vegeta averted his gaze. "They're not something I like thinking about… Knowing just how weak I was back then… It's humiliating…"

"Didn't you… say you were a child when it started…?" Goku recalled.

"...Yeah…" Vegeta admitted after a long moment of silence. "When I was… in the Frieza force… There were… *people* there… who were much stronger than I was… and I guess… they needed somebody to take their frustrations out on, so they chose me... It first… started when I was about seven… and it continued… for over thirteen years… But then… there was this day, they decided… to get *extra rough* with me… and I just… *snapped* , because of the pain I was in..."

"What did you do to them?" Goku pressed gently. Whatever all had happened to Vegeta was apparently so traumatizing he could hardly even speak of it. Goku knew now that it was multiple people, but Vegeta still refused to give any names.

"...I killed them, Kakarot…" Vegeta's voice cracked. "I blasted their bodies until there was nothing *left* of them… What other choice did I *have* …?"

"It's… okay. You were just… defending yourself." Goku said.

"I *had* to…" Vegeta clutched the fabric of Goku's gi.

"I know…" Goku managed, knowing fully well that asking him for their identities was out of the question. "The ones that you killed that day…, were they the only ones who did that to you…?"

"No…" Vegeta replied, shakily. "There were… a few others as well… I just… It *disgusts* me… Just knowing that this blasted universe is *filled* with people like that... Ones who will trample over the wills of others until they *destroy* them. But I am *not* some *animal*, or ***plaything*** *for people to* ***screw around with***... I'm a ***Saiyan,*** Kakarot…"

"Yeah… You *are*... And you're one of the strongest people I know…" Goku touched his cheek, a pained look on his face. "Like *really* strong… How'd you… even put up with that for so long…?"

"Well…, if I let one thing like that *break* me… then I wouldn't have *survived* … I simply endured what I had to…" Vegeta said.

Goku swallowed, as the reality of it all set in, and he did the only thing he could do - He hugged him, moving his hand to the back of his head to stroke his hair, which was soft and silky to the

touch. "...You're really amazing, Vegeta… I know I told ya that before and all… But I mean it…"

Vegeta relaxed in his embrace, resting against his chest. "...Thanks, but I should be telling you that. You did something I *never* could have. Standing up… in front of all of those people - *anybody for that matter* - and admitting that I, the prince of all Saiyans, had been *raped* …? I wouldn't have been *able* to do that… Not like *you* did…"

"Still, if not for you encouraging me when you *did* … I wouldn't have been able to *either* …" Goku admitted, spooning him.

Vegeta smiled a bit, relaxing in his arms. Usually, he liked to be the big spoon, but he could accept this for now. "Heh, I guess we make a pretty good team, *after all* …, don't we, Kakarot…?"

"Yeah, maybe Whis was right about us…" Goku couldn't even deny it. He laughed a bit. "Hey, we should try fusing again sometime… You think…?"

"Idiot. You talk too much. Go to sleep already."

…

A/N: So yeah uh anyways. I apologize if certain stuff is rushed. This was hard for me to revisit. Once again, I have no idea if I'm going to be posting more. Maybe, if people really want me to, but I've been devoting basically every hour of every day to this haha and this one took forever. I struggled hard with it, so I really hope somebody enjoyed it, and would love feedback regardless.

Even The Strongest [Part 1/2]

Story: Even the Strongest, Chapter 9 (Part 1/2)

Disclaimer: I don't own Dragon Ball

A/N: Hollllly shit, sorry it's been so long, since I last updated. I have created like, 80 different docs to this chapter alone just trying to figure out a way to make it work, and 25+ different starters with nothing sounding right)

But then, after getting advice from the amazing writer Sammysshampoo, I FINALLY had a direction on where to go(and I just want to say thank you thank you thank so much, because I never would have been able to do it without you. SERIOUSLY, your input and support throughout this chapter was a literal life saver for real. TwT.)

HUGE TRIGGER WARNINGS AHEAD:

4 Rape scenes (Sexual abuse) which I'll try to give warnings on, Eating Disorder, and Minor Self-harm. Also a lot of drinking if that's a trigger for anyone.

I've explored Goku's story, so for this chapter and the possible conclusion to the story as a whole, I'll be going into Vegeta's. Warning ahead of time that it gets very dark in nature. Because the rapist explored in this portion of Vegeta's story is psychotic, dangerous, and unpredictable.

1. ***As implied, Vegeta suffers a LOT in this chapter, ok? It DOES get better, but he suffers badly before that. I'm so nervous even posting this, because I'm not used to writing stuff like this.***

2. ***As a positive, for VegeKaka fans, this chapter is much more sexual than the previous ones, and I sincerely hope y'all feel it's worth it by the end, because I tried my damndest to give it a good payoff. (This is actually my first time writing sexual stuff like this, so it was a VERY interesting experience for me.)***

ALSO, I had to work up a timeline to figure out how much time had passed since the beginning of the story and I was SHOCKED, when I realized it was about TWO years. I did huff it a little, though, so keep that in mind. I'll probably post a timeline once I know I'm done for sure.

So nervous about sharing this because it's sexual abuse, I tried to avoid making it overly graphic, but there are unfortunately psychos like this so it leaves me on a stand still to how to avoid going overboard. I kinda feel guilty right now, writing a character like this. I don't want to come off insensitive with the way I handled this topic matter specifically because of how dark and touchy it is. I Really Did Try My Best.

...

"Woah! This place is huge!"

"You're telling me. I mean I knew it was big but not *this* big…"

Switching back and forth between worlds was a fairly common occurrence by now, but the reason for Goku and Vegeta coming back to Earth this time was something completely different.

The two Saiyans were immediately astonished by the size of the house that Bulma had picked out for them; the house that Vegeta had asked her to pick out for them.

Their new home.

It wasn't just large, it was *three stories* .

"So… What do you think, boys? Why don't you go on in?" Bulma smirked at them.

Goku made no haste in checking it out, followed by Vegeta.

Goku made loud remarks about each one of the rooms, especially the kitchen.

"Look Vegeta, it's even got a pantry room, that way we can store as much food as we need in here. Man, you really went all out with this one, huh, Bulma?" Goku laughed. "And that swimming pool

too. Gosh, it's gotta be the largest one I've ever seen!"

"You know me. I refuse to accept anything but the best. Oh, I forgot. Vegeta?" Bulma looked over at the other Saiyan who hadn't said much, right as Goku walked off to one of the other rooms.

"Huh?" Vegeta looked at her.

"Here… I have a couple capsule cars that I'd like for you to take." She explained, handing them to him. "One of them is a new model of sorts that our company has been working on for a while now. I want you to test it out for me and tell me what you think."

"Oh, so I'm a guinea pig now, is that it? If that thing explodes, I hope you know I'm blaming you." Vegeta scoffed.

"Aww, but you're a big boy now, I'm sure you can handle it. Or is the Saiyan prince too scared…?"

"Tch. Woman, you really love trying my patience, don't you…?" Vegeta muttered.

"You know you'd be nothing without me." Bulma replied, unphased.

Another scoff.

Even if he wouldn't admit it, he knew she was right. And she *knew* he knew.

"By the way…" Bulma looked at him with a tent of mischief. "Have the two of you… you know… *done* it yet?"

W-What are you saying?!" Vegeta stammered, blushing furiously. "I… th-that's none of your business…!"

"Come on, it's nothing to be embarrassed about. Just *tell* me." Bulma grinned.

Vegeta stared at her for a moment before his stomach clenched. He turned away, his ears hot. "...N-No… We haven't… Not yet, anyways… One day, I'd like to, but… I don't really know if he's ready for that yet…. Honestly, I'm not sure if he'll ever be."

Truth be told they hadn't discussed having sex since White Day, and it had been months since then, so deep down, he had no clue what Goku's current feelings were on the matter.

"If he wasn't, would that bother you…?" Bulma inquired.

"Of course not… Why *would* it…?" Vegeta mumbled.

"Well, everybody's different. Some guys need that. Others don't. As long as your interests align, I suppose that's really all that matters." Bulma spoke with nonchalance on the matter. "Besides, if sex itself isn't all that important to you, you could always just masturbate."

"You're so vulgar. Just get out of here already." Vegeta chastised, mockingly, becoming even redder.

"Hey, relax, I'm only kidding." Bulma shrugged it off, before her expression softened. "But on a more serious note… Take care of him, would you? I can tell he really looks up to you."

"You don't need to worry." Vegeta said. "He's safe with me…"

"I'm trusting you." Bulma handed him the keys to the house. "Anyways, I really need to get back to work now. I'll see you later, Vegeta."

"Yeah. Thanks, Bulma." Vegeta took them.

"Don't mention it." Bulma said simply, before she made her exit.

He then went to locate Goku, who was currently checking out the hot tub.

"Oh, hey, has Bulma left?" Goku looked up at him.

"Yeah, we should probably start sorting out the boxes, since she was nice enough to bring them all here." Vegeta said.

"Kay, I'll be out in a minute." Goku said, before turning back around.

Vegeta then headed to the master bedroom where a large stack of boxes had been put. Truth be told, they didn't have a lot of stuff all things considered, and some things Bulma had already had a team set up such as the TV and she had even gotten him a king size bed, one which he and Goku would undoubtedly be sharing.

While they were in Beerus's world, Vegeta had specifically told her that he'd accept whatever and left everything up to her because Goku didn't need to be around a place that was stressing him out too much for too long. He needed a place that, for the *most* part, he could move straight into.

That was only possible, of course, because of how rich Bulma was, but Vegeta was grateful nonetheless.

Vegeta separated the boxes that had his name on them, opening them up and taking out his stuff. Goku soon joined him, but didn't have nearly as much stuff to sort through. Mainly just some pairs of clothing.

After he was done, he sprawled out on the bed. "This place is awesome. It's really hard to believe we'll be living here."

"Yeah, well, don't get too excited, we've still got a lot of work to do before it's done. Hey! No sleeping until we get our room sorted."

"Oops, sorry. I'm just so exhausted right now… it's that pill they give me… It makes me drowsy sometimes, y'know…?" Goku's voice was groggy.

"...I'm aware, but that medicine is all we have… Besides, you haven't been eating very much, so I'm sure that's contributing. Come here, I want you to help me sort these."

"Sort what?"

"These clothes. They're yours. Separate the pants from the shirts, and bring them over there to the dresser next to the door. And stack them neatly."

"Great, not this again, I can't stand doin' laundry." Goku pouted.

"Oh, Stop complaining. Just be glad I don't make you fold them." Vegeta muttered, watching as Goku brought them over to the shelf, doing as told.

He heard the other Saiyan mutter something under his breath, but chose not to comment.

…

An hour later, Vegeta seemed satisfied with the job.

"There, we should have all the important stuff out of the way now. We'll sort the stuff in the bathroom next. After we tear down these boxes." Vegeta made quick work in doing exactly that, although Goku was moving much slower, but still tore down a few.

Neither one of them said much, and Goku almost seemed out of it.

Still, Vegeta chose not to ask about it. He just got like this sometimes.

After carrying them to the trash can that was outside of the house, Vegeta then came back in to see that Goku had already started working on the boxes in the bathroom.

He was taking out some shampoo.

"Scoot over." Vegeta sat down next to him, grabbing a box of his own.

The two Saiyans sat in silence, sorting out box after box and it wasn't long before they had finally filled the shelves and cabinets with their belongings.

…

One thing Vegeta was grateful for, but expected since he had specifically asked Bulma for it, was that the drawers and cabinets were lockable. That way Goku wouldn't have free access to things like knives, forks, or scissors. Anything that he could use to hurt himself would remain locked away just as it had been on Beerus's world.

His biggest concern was that Goku might choose to leave and find one that way anyway, which unfortunately wasn't something he could so easily prevent.

…

Later that evening, as Vegeta was in one of the other rooms, the smell of stew hit his nose.

Goku was apparently cooking something.

"What are you making?" Vegeta approached him, noticing that his shirt had been tossed on the floor.

"It's beef stew, I thought you might be hungry." Goku acknowledged him while keeping his focus on the food.

"Smells nice. But why are you shirtless?" Vegeta asked.

"I kinda spilled some stuff on it earlier and it was wet, so I decided to take it off." Goku explained, awkwardly.

"Clutz…" Vegeta scoffed in amusement, his lips meeting Goku's back, hugging against him from behind.

Goku's face flashed bright red when he felt Vegeta's hand brush against his pec, ever so slightly cupping it.

"V-Vegeta… Your hand… It's touching my…" Goku trailed off, his voice weak due to how sensitive the spot was.

"Ah, s-sorry… I really wasn't trying to do anything, I swear…!" Vegeta stammered as he quickly pulled back. It had been an accident, but the feeling was unforgettable. The skin there was so soft.

"I-it's okay, really… Don't worry about it..." Goku's heart pounded in his ears, the sensation of Vegeta's skin brushing against his pec having burned into his memory.

The way he held me just now… It felt so nice. I kinda wish… he'd touch me there more…

No, what's wrong with me? I shouldn't be thinking these things… It's too weird…

He cursed himself, feeling ashamed at the thought.

"Well… Just… be careful… We wouldn't want you getting burned." Fearing that he had crossed over a line, Vegeta backed up.

Crap… I hope I didn't upset him…

Everything was too awkward, so he finally moved over, sitting down at the table to keep an eye on him.

Down deep, some part of him wanted so badly to touch him there again, just to feel those precious lumps of flesh in his palms, but he wasn't going to step over any lines that Goku was uncomfortable with.

"Don't worry, I won't." Goku assured him with a gentle smile. Although the temptation was there, there were only certain types of injuries that he could tolerate when it came to self-harm. Burning himself on a stove top wasn't in that equation. Maybe that was why he hadn't blasted himself with his own energy by now either. He had certain methods he liked and others that he didn't.

For a long time, Vegeta found himself caught in a trance as Goku clumsily fumbled around with the spoon in the pot.

So adorable…

Briefly, he caught Goku glancing back at him, immediately afterwards turning away again, bashfully.

"What do you keep staring at me for? It's makin' me nervous…" Goku asked.

Vegeta could hardly contain himself when Goku got so flustered around him. It made him feel empowered somehow. "I can't help it. You're my partner, Kakarot. And the most beautiful man I've ever laid eyes on. Why *wouldn't* I want to look at you?"

The love in his expression was genuine.

"You always say that about me…" Goku looked down.

"Well, it's true… You *are* beautiful…" Vegeta said, his lips still curved upwards.

"...A-Ah thanks… You're… beautiful too…" Goku didn't know how else to even respond to that.

"Heh. You're not very used to receiving compliments on your looks, are you…?" Vegeta asked, amused.

"It's not… that I've never been *complimented* before… I just… don't always know how to respond to it…" Goku replied with apprehension. Maybe he was supposed to say something different?

"I can tell." But Vegeta held no judgment. Truth be told, he rather liked seeing this side to Goku.

…

"Kay, the stew's done. I'll dip you out some then I'll put the rest in the fridge." Goku grabbed a paper bowl, spooning some into it.

"Just me…? You're going to eat *too* , aren't you? Here, let me make some soup." Vegeta got up, grabbing a can from the cabinet. "And turn off the stove."

"Oh, whoops…! Guess I forgot about that." Goku giggled, turning off the nob.

"Idiot…" Vegeta muttered, opening the can he was holding.

"Woah…" It was at that moment that a dizzy spell hit Goku out of nowhere. He clung onto Vegeta's shoulders to stop himself from falling.

"Hey… are you okay?" Vegeta caught him in his arms, placing the can aside to deal with Goku.

"Sorry." Goku slurred. "I kinda started feeling a bit dizzy all of a sudden…"

"It's alright. Let's go get you sat down." Vegeta said, leading him over to the table.

Almost immediately, Goku folded his arms over the table, burying his face in his arms.

Goku shakily gasped for air like he was trying to regain his breath.

It must be the medication causing this…

He acted like he wasn't feeling well earlier either.

"Do you want me to call somebody?" Vegeta had a feeling he'd say no, but he chose to offer it anyway.

"No, it's alright. Just… give me a moment, okay?" Goku assured him.

Vegeta brushed some hair out of his face, gently. "Well, if you're sure. I should have your soup done in a few minutes. Then we can eat."

"Kay…" But Goku's mind couldn't be further from eating.

…

"Here. Think you can sit up?" Vegeta took a seat next to Goku, holding the bowl of soup alongside the bowl of the beef stew that Goku had set aside for him.

"Yeah, I think so…" Goku said, taking his bowl and spoon. His hands were shaking.

Vegeta then grabbed a protein shake and bottle of water from the fridge. Before he and Goku had even come here, Bulma had fortunately already had a team stuff their fridge with various items, although Vegeta and Goku would be responsible for keeping themselves restocked in the future.

He felt visible relief when he saw Goku begin to eat, sitting down next to him.

Even if Goku hadn't cut himself since Beerus found out about his relapse, there was one thing that had Vegeta concerned.

It was true that it was hard to tell, because the medication he was on had similar side effects, but he had been having even more dizzy spells lately than before.

*Is it possible his appetite has something to do with this? No, he **has** been eating, just as much as he was **before** , so why is his health suddenly declining like this?*

"I'm finished… I want some milk." Goku said, after scarfing the meal and protein shake down as quickly as possible.

He had been having to ask permission to use cups and glasses because of the incident on Beerus's world where he had broken a cup and used the glass to hurt himself with it. It wouldn't have been an issue if Goku hadn't relapsed the last time they were there, but Vegeta couldn't take any risk.

"Um… Yeah, sure." Vegeta got up, unlocking the cabinet and taking out a cup. He then grabbed the milk jug from the fridge, pouring him some.

"Thanks…" Goku murmured, as he gulped it down, handing the cup back to him. "I'm goin' to the bathroom."

As Goku walked off, Vegeta began to clean off the cup he had drank from, returning it to its previous spot in the cabinet

That's when he remembered the shirt that had been tossed aside.

Can't that idiot ever learn to clean up after himself...?

He picked it up, bringing it to the laundry room and heading to the second floor.

When he got there, he heard the sound of water going.

Is he taking a shower? It seems kind of early.

He cracked open the door, peaking in. He knew it'd be unlocked because he had had Bulma remove the locks on the bathrooms for Goku's safety. "In the future, just make sure you pick up your clothes. I'd rather not to have to…"

His voice immediately caught in his throat at the sight before him. Goku on the floor, kneeling down in front of the toilet. He had just pulled his fingers out of his mouth right as Vegeta came into the room. He was throwing up.

"Kakarot…?" Vegeta was speechless.

"Vegeta…" Goku's heart skipped a beat, as his head whipped towards him, his eyes wide with guilt. He didn't seem to have time to formulate own thoughts either. A strand of saliva broke between his fingers and mouth.

Kakarot..?
Vegeta!

"...You… threw up…? I thought you had *stopped* …" Vegeta uttered in disbelief.

"I *had* … For a while…" Goku turned away. He was shaking.

"So is this… Why you keep scarfing down meals then…?" Vegeta wanted to know. "Because you were planning on purging…?"

Goku lowered his head a bit. He couldn't even deny it. "It's easier if you haven't digested it yet. That way it doesn't burn as much when coming back up. I also heard dairy products helped some, so I wanted to try it..."

"Who told you that…?" Vegeta approached him, flushing the toilet.

"I overheard a couple of people at capsule corp talking about it earlier." Goku said vaguely.

Typical. Vegeta grabbed a rag, sighing.

"You're not mad at me, are you…?" Goku's bangs shadowed his eyes.

"No." Vegeta grabbed a rag, dampening it under the shower. He crouched down in front of him, and cupped Goku's chin so he could get him to meet his eyes. When Goku looked up, Vegeta cleaned off his face and mouth. "I just wish you would talk to me about this stuff. This can't keep going on. You know that."

"I know… I just…" Goku didn't finish.

"Listen… I want you to brush your teeth and wash your hands for me… We'll talk about this later. For now, I need you to go and rest for a while. You look pale."

No doubt as to *why* .

Goku did as told, leaving Vegeta to his own devices once he was done and heading back to the room.

Once the other Saiyan had left, Vegeta had to take a moment to breathe, turning off the shower and leaning against the wall.

…

"I'm *trying* , Bulma, but what am I supposed to do? He's *starving* himself." Vegeta pled into the phone for answers.

"I've already given you my advice on this, Vegeta. Setting him up with a therapist could take time. So *you need to take him to a hospital if you want immediate support on something like this."*

"And you really expect him to agree to that…?!" Vegeta hissed. "You've got to be joking."

"Well, whether he agrees to it or not is another matter entirely. And you know Goku. Getting him to say yes to something like that isn't going to be easy. I could offer you a crisis number so you can have some people come out and talk to him, but ultimately I think they'll probably suggest the same thing, especially if he's been having thoughts of hurting himself on top of it. And personally, I think if it's coming from somebody that Goku trusts, like you, then he'd be much more likely to say yes to it than if it were some stranger."

"No, there has to be another *option* ." Vegeta refused. "I can't do that to him…! Can you imagine how scared he'd be?"

"Well, I can't help you if you're going to be stubborn about it."

"I'm *not* being stubborn. I just don't want to abandon him." Vegeta argued.

"You're not 'abandoning' him. It's only for a few weeks and then he'll be out again."

"I know that, but-"

"Think about it this way. If a few weeks of hassle happens to save his life, then don't you think that's worth it?"

Save his life.

Hearing those words struck something inside of Vegeta, making him realize the severity of the situation. Bulma hadn't worded it like that by accident.

"...I guess so…" He finally admitted, despite not liking it. "I'll… figure something out."

When he hung up, he was once again left at a stand still. Same advice as always. The hospital, a last resort that he had been actively avoiding. For multiple reasons.

What could such a place really even do for Goku that he *himself* hadn't *already* ?

They could keep him under surveillance, provide him with some advice on coping mechanisms and *what* ?

Maybe put him on more medication??? That could be done with his *usual* doctor.

But medication alone wasn't going to solve this, he knew that.

And yet… at the same time… A place like that would have resources. They would know who to contact, specialists, and so much more..

It frustrated him just thinking about it, but, once again he found himself hit with the harsh reality of the situation.

It was the only option there was, because he was already at a danger of hurting himself as it was, even without the eating disorder playing a part.

After all, it was pretty clear by now that this issue wasn't going to go away on its own.

And if he didn't eat something soon and keep it down, he was going to end up collapsing or worse.

Running his fingers through his hair, he let out a sigh, before leaving the kitchen and heading upstairs to locate Goku.

When he reached the third floor, the sounds of crying entered his senses. He rushed to their bedroom, knowing that's where it was coming from, to find Goku crying in his sleep.

He must be having a nightmare again.

Even though the medication he was on helped significantly, it hadn't got rid of them entirely. He could recall at least a few nights he woke up to hear Goku crying. But from what he could tell, it wasn't anything regular.

"Kakarot…?" Vegeta started to call out, placing a hand on his shoulder.

"Grandpa..." Goku uttered through a sob, cutting him off.

Hearing that was more than Vegeta could take.

So that's what it is…

It must have been bothering him lately.

It's getting close to that time again.

The day he died.

"Babe, wake up." Vegeta moved his hand up to Goku's face, giving him a small pinch. "You're having a nightmare."

Goku gasped, opening his eyes. "Vegeta…?"

"Hey." Vegeta studied him with concern. "Dreaming about your grandfather again…?"

"...He was just there… And then he was gone…" Goku wasn't sure he was making any sense, but he was still out of it.

"I know." Vegeta understood perfectly. "It happened out of nowhere."

"He was so happy that day... And even smiling… He had just taken me fishing, and I helped him cook the meal. I didn't think it was all that great, but he said he really liked it, so…" Goku's voice cracked. "I wanted to cook more for him…"

As Goku broke down in tears, Vegeta traced a hand along the side of his face, soaking up the tears with the fabric of his glove. "I'm sure he would have loved that…"

"...I just wish I had known… about the transformation back then… I would have stayed inside with him… But like an idiot, I just had to go waltzing out anyway and stare at the moon, even though he had told me not to." Goku swallowed, trembling.

"Kakarot…" Vegeta tried to speak, but couldn't formulate his thoughts before Goku continued.

"I know he'd want me to be happy and move on, but I just can't. I can't forgive myself for what I did to him… His body… There was so much blood. I can't stop seeing it… And his eyes… They… keep staring at me. I want it to stop…" Goku choked out, clutching at his chest and gasping for air.

"Kakarot, listen to me…" Vegeta stroked his back in a gentle manner. "I need you to slow down and try to breathe for me. Can you do that?"

"I… think so…" Goku barely managed, doing as told.

"That's it. You're doing good." He took hold of Goku's hand with his own, massaging it gently. "Just follow my lead…"

One after another, he began to enact breathing motions to get him to mimic him.

It took a while for Goku to finally relax, but, after a while, he did, lulled by the sound of Vegeta's voice as he spoke.

"Feeling any better?" Vegeta asked.

Goku nodded, but turned his head into the pillow. "I keep having these dreams… that I could go back into the past and change what had happened, but no matter what I do, I always end up transforming anyways…"

"You've been having nightmares again…? Oh, Kakarot, why didn't you tell me..?" Now, this was new. Sure, he had woken up a few times to hear Goku crying and would try to console him, but he didn't realize it was happening regularly. Maybe he only woke up on the nights that Goku cried and not the others, so that's why he didn't know. But also he wasn't there with him all the time since Goku often slept during the day.

"I didn't want to worry you." Goku melted as Vegeta's hand touched his.

"But that's what I'm here for." Vegeta insisted. "I don't mind acting as an advocate for you and talking to the doctor in your place at times if you need me to, but I can't do that if you won't tell me what's going on."

"I know that, I just…" Goku trailed off.

"It's okay. We'll figure it out, but listen… There's something I want to try and I need you to agree to it." Vegeta swallowed, seeming nervous.

"What?" Goku seemed unsure.

"I'm… going to bring you to the hospital… And I want you to tell them what's going on…" Vegeta tried to approach the conversation with as much care as he could have, but beating around the bush wasn't an option.

Goku's eyes widened.

"No. No, I don't wanna go to a hospital. Vegeta, please…" He backed up, shaking his head frantically.

"I'm sorry… You're not *well* right now… you've been starving yourself, and… if this keeps going on, I… I could *lose* you… I can't *risk* that…" Vegeta ran his hand through his hair, tears welling up in his eyes.

"Vegeta, I'll stop, I swear. Don't make me go there… Please…" Goku pled, his shoulders trembling. He could hardly breathe.

"Shh, hey… just listen to me…" Vegeta tried to soothe him, but the other Saiyan wasn't hearing it.

"No, I won't…" Goku scooted back on the bed again, even further from him. "You just want to get rid of me…"

Okay, hearing that stung. "What? Kakarot, that's not true. I'm not-"

"I know I'm a lot to handle sometimes, and I keep makin' things worse for you. So if you want to leave me after this, I'd understand… But still… you don't have to lock me away in some hospital to

get me to go away…. I'll just go..." Tears falling down his cheeks, Goku reached up, placing two fingers on his forehead.

"Wait, don't!" Vegeta had no clue where he was planning on going, but he was afraid that if he let him go, he would never see him again.

So in a panic, right before Goku could use his instant transmission, Vegeta grabbed his wrist, stopping him just in time.

"Hey! Let go!" Goku struggled to break from Vegeta's grasp, but the other man was too strong.

"No, I'm not going to let you do this. You're going to stay right here, and hear what I have to tell you." Vegeta demanded sternly, forcing his hands down on the bed between them. He didn't like having to restrain Goku but it was the only option he had left.

Goku knew at this point he had no choice in the matter. He sniffled, but didn't protest otherwise.

"Now, I'm not leaving you, okay…?" Vegeta averted his gaze. "It only be for a few weeks, then you can come back home…"

"I don't want to, I hate hospitals..." Goku murmured.

"I *know* that. And I'm not going to make you stay there any longer than necessary, I just think they might be able to provide you with some advice that I myself wouldn't have been able to. That's all. Can't you at least try it…? For me?" Vegeta tried his best to convince himself he wasn't abandoning Goku, because that wasn't his intention. Truth be told, he wanted the other Saiyan by his side more than anything. To remain in bed with him until morning. But if there was the slightest chance that this could help him, he would take it.

"...And it's… really only for a few weeks…? No more…?" Goku had been in hospitals due to injuries for months before. In comparison, that didn't sound the worst.

"Yeah… I'll even come and visit you. That way you won't have to be there alone all the time." Vegeta offered. "And, hey, when all of this is over, maybe could go and do something special. Just the two of us."

"Something… special…?" Goku looked at him, with a tinge of curiosity, and budding trust. "Like what…?"

Leaning in, Vegeta gently pressed their lips together with the smallest of smiles.

"That's for me to know, and for you to find out." He teased, tracing a finger over his chest. " *If* you behave."

"Okay…" The sensation of Vegeta's finger caused a tingly warmth to form in Goku's chest. Once again, he found himself wanting it to last, but couldn't say it.

"If… you're still afraid to do this, I'd understand… I can't force you…" Vegeta admitted. "Even so… If possible, I'd like for you to give yourself this chance to heal… But that choice is up to you… What do *you* want to do, Kakarot…?"

Goku was quiet for a moment as he pondered Vegeta's words with uncertainty.

"...I'll go…" He finally spoke. "If you really think this is for the best…. Then… I'll do it…"

"I see…" All Vegeta could do was kiss his earlobe, pulling him into an embrace after releasing his hands. He whispered into his ear soothingly. "If that's your decision, then we'll face this together."

…

"Get in. We're going for a ride." Vegeta later invited him into one of the capsules cars that Bulma had given him. He probably wouldn't have used a car, but Goku wasn't in any state to be flying around right now. He had already almost collapsed earlier, Vegeta didn't want to take any risks while they were in mid air.

"Hey, wait, I didn't know you knew how to drive." Goku noted with interest.

"Yeah, well, there's a lot of things you don't know about me, so get used to it." Vegeta said simply, before switching on his phone and plugging in maps to locate the closest hospital.

It would be about 15 minutes.

Pulling on his seat belt, Goku slumped over, leaning against the window.

He still wasn't feeling well, Vegeta could see that. Reaching over, he ran a few fingers through the other Saiyan's hair as if trying to reassure him.

Goku was quiet for a long moment, before speaking back up. "...When… When I get back… I… I think I'd like to try it with you…"

"Try what, Kakarot…?" Vegeta asked.

"You know… S-sex…" The response came out, barely above a whisper.

"Sex?" Vegeta's ears heated up, taken aback by the sudden topic change. "Where did *that* come from…?"

"Well, it's just that… I um… I kinda liked how your hands felt on me earlier… when I was cooking…" Goku's cheeks tinged red as he fidgeted around with his fingers due to his nerves. "I know it was an accident and all, but still… it felt nice."

Vegeta paused for a moment as he processed his words. "I see…, then… if that's something you really want… Then you can look forward to it…"

"...The truth is I really like it when you touch me… Unlike… *him* , you're always so gentle with me, so… if it was with you… I think… I'd be okay with it…"

Painfully, Vegeta looked off to the side, his strokes in Goku's hair continuing. "I'm not… as soft as you think I am… but… if that's what you need me to be, then I don't mind…"

"...I love you…" Goku closed his eyes, relaxing under his touch.

"I love you too."

….

When they got there, there weren't a lot of people in the emergency room, minus for a few older women that were sitting in the lobby.

"Come here." Vegeta led Goku up to the lady sitting at the desk.

"What brings you in tonight?" She asked.

"He's been having trouble keeping food down. Purging."

"Name?"

"It's Son Goku."

The woman asked several other questions before stepping away for a moment. When she came back, she had an armband. "Mr. Son, can I see your wrist?"

Goku held out his arm, letting her put it on him.

"Go and sit over there, somebody will be calling you back shortly."

Goku wordlessly walked off to the seats that she had pointed at.

Vegeta followed close by, sitting down next to him.

"Do you know my number…? We'll probably be separated for a while but I want you to be able to call me."

"Could you maybe write it down for me? I don't really remember numbers very well…" Goku lowered his head slightly.

"Sure, let me go get a sticky note."

"Kay." Goku said.

Vegeta got up and grabbed one from the desk, taking out a pen from the cup and writing down his cell phone number.

He brought it back and handed it to Goku. "Here. Just try not to lose it, okay?"

"You… promise you'll keep your phone on…?" Goku nervously fidgeted with the fabric of his clothes, bouncing his leg. "So if I call you, you'll hear it."

"I promise." Vegeta murmured.

"And… you'll keep it with you, right?" Goku pulled at his wrist cuff.

"Yes, Kakarot… I'll keep it with me, fully charged."

"I'm afraid if you're training, you won't notice it ring… " Goku swallowed, his bangs falling in his face. "And then… I'll miss my chance to talk to you…"

"That's not going to happen." Vegeta assured him. "No matter what time it is, I'll answer. I'm not going to abandon you."

"...Mn…" Goku struggled to respond, rubbing at his arm.

"Son Goku?" The voice of a woman called out.

Goku got up and approached her. "That's me."

Vegeta would have followed him, but he was told that he needed to wait first until Goku had seen a doctor.

It was understandable, so Vegeta sat back down.

…

Goku was asked some questions, before he was led to the other unit.

"We're going to need to ask that you change into these and take off everything except your underwear." A nurse told Goku.

He had been brought to a room that was almost entirely empty save for a bed and a TV.

Goku didn't particularly like being watched when he was undressing but he knew they weren't going to leave until he changed, so, slowly, he removed himself of his clothing and as expected, the

paper gown they had given him was as uncomfortable as it could have been.

"We need your armbands too."

"My arm bands? But those are-" Goku started to protest, feeling like he was being robbed but took them off and handed them to them. "Fine…"

After pulling on the hospital socks they had given him, he was quick to wrap himself up in the blanket that was sitting on the bed.

The staff gathered his clothing into a patient belongings bag. At the very least, however, they did allow him to keep the sticky note that Vegeta had given him.

A few minutes later, some guy scanned him over with a metal detector to make sure he had no weapons on him, before somebody else took his vitals.

A registered nurse's assistant had been assigned to sit outside his door, although he was mostly on his phone.

It took about an hour before the doctor finally got up with him. He was a middle aged man, and wore glasses.

"Can I ask you a little bit about what brings you in tonight?" He asked.

"My boyfriend was worried about me…" Goku said vaguely.

"Any specific reason?"

"...It's…" He paused. Explaining it to anybody except Vegeta felt wrong to him.

"It says here that you've been throwing up food. Is that correct?" The doctor seemed to know, but asked anyways.

"Yeah… He found out I was purging again… I almost fainted earlier."

"Are you having thoughts of hurting yourself right now?"

"Some…"

"That's a lot of scars. You've really done a number."

"Mn." Goku wasn't sure how to respond.

"Is there any specific reason?"

"It's a lotta things. I'd rather not talk about it right now." He replied stubbornly, somewhat tuning the doctor out until he asked about the medications he was on to which Goku simply told him to talk to Vegeta about it.

The doctor had him sign a form consenting to treatment, and then a hipaa waiver so he would have permission to discuss his records with Vegeta and get the information he needed, as well as several other papers.

Goku did so, despite how tired he was.

…

Vegeta was allowed back a couple hours later but was told he couldn't stay long due to visiting hours almost being over.

The staff had apparently hooked Goku up to some kind of tube, one that had been stuck through his nose.

He also looked somewhat out of it.

They must have put him on a sedative of some kind to calm him down.

He took a seat next to him in the chair, briefly glancing at the man sitting by Goku's door.

"Hey…" Goku gazed over at him, with a small smile.

"Hey, yourself." Vegeta smirked. "It's nice to see a little color on your face for a change. You looked as pale as a ghost earlier."

Goku giggled a bit, before his expression became saddened. "I hope you're not mad at me…"

"For what…?" Vegeta inquired softly.

"Because I keep hidin' stuff from you and lyin' about it. I never did that before." Goku looked down.

"You were scared, that's why… You thought I'd judge you for it… But it's alright… I'm not angry. Just worried… All I want right now is for you to heal." Vegeta yet again found himself brushing some hair out of Goku's face in the tender way that Goku loved so much.

"Oh, hey, there's a TV in here. Why don't we put something on? I'm sure it would be better than staring at the wall. You think?" Vegeta offered.

"Mn… Maybe…" Goku's response was delayed, his eyes half-lidded, obviously due to the drugs.

Getting up, Vegeta asked the RNA for the remote. Vegeta took it, and turned it on at low volume to some channel that was playing funny animal clips.

Goku giggled at a few of them, but slowly started to nod off, too exhausted to keep his eyes open.

Vegeta didn't mind.

Even with Goku asleep, Vegeta stayed until he was asked to leave by the staff due to visiting hours being over.

"Kakarot. I've got to leave now, but I'm coming back tomorrow. Is there anything you want me to get you? Like a book or-"

"Crayons. And paper." Goku interrupted. "They won't let me have pens or pencils here."

"Crayons, huh? But wouldn't markers be more sufficient?" Vegeta offered.

"Ah, maybe… I hadn't thought of that…" Goku admitted.

"I'll go ask them. And see what I can bring. In the meantime, I want you to get some rest for me." Vegeta caressed his cheek before he started to pull away.

Goku took his hand before he could.

"Kiss…" He said weakly.

Vegeta leaning down towards him.

"Missing my lips that badly, are you? It's only been a few hours." Vegeta teased.

"Can't help it… I like it when you kiss me…" Affectionate eyes met Vegeta's as the other Saiyan pulled him into a kiss.

Vegeta wasn't sure what to think at first, but he smiled nonetheless. "I'll see you tomorrow."

"Come early, okay?" Goku looked at him expectantly.

"Yeah, I'll do that…" Vegeta kissed him one last time, this time on his forehead.

…

"Do you know if they're going to be sending him somewhere?" Vegeta approached a woman he saw at the desk.

"We're not sure yet. He still needs to see our therapist and she'll decide whether he needs to be sent to another facility or not. But, in cases like this, particularly because he's been having thoughts of harming himself, he probably *will* be." She explained.

"Do you have an idea how long that'll take?" He wanted to know.

"It all depends on availability. It could take anywhere from a day to several weeks to find a bed for him. Certain facilities also have the right to refuse patients depending on criteria, so it's more of just a waiting game to know for sure."

"I see." Vegeta pondered it. "Is there anything that I could bring him? He wanted crayons and paper… He's allowed to have those, right?"

"Yes, he can have those." She said.

"What about markers?" Vegeta asked.

"He'll need to be supervised when he's using them, but yes. If you could, you might want to bring him a few changes of clothes as well, in the case that he's sent to another facility. Just nothing with strings or hoodies."

"Oh, alright. Also, about his medication, do you need me to bring his pills?" He spoke back up nervously. "I spoke with the doctor about it earlier, but I don't think they've given him any."

"If you could do that, that would be great." She said.

"Alright… I'll bring his stuff here first thing tomorrow morning, then. Thanks." Vegeta took his leave after that, making his way out to the front of the building and taking out his capsule car again.

However, right after he got in, he leaned his forehead against the steering wheel, closing his eyes.

Just breathe.

He'll be fine.

*He **has** to be.*

…

When Vegeta returned to visit him the next day, Goku was being spoken to by a therapist who asked him some questions about what had been going on, his family history, his trauma, the nightmares he had been having and various other things. Even about his relationship with Vegeta and what that had been like for him.

He almost wanted to ask to go back home, but knew that Vegeta was counting on him to see this through to the end, so he cooperated.

Vegeta didn't say much and just listened to the two talk. When the woman left, Vegeta gave him the crayons and paper. "I got these for you. The markers are with the woman at the front desk.

"Thanks, Vegeta…" Goku took them, but didn't bother to open the box.

"Don't mention it. So how have things been going?" Vegeta asked.

"Well, I told them I wanted to get a shower a few hours ago, but they still haven't done anything. My hair feels all oily right now… Man, I can't stand hospitals."

"I'm sure they're probably busy right now." Vegeta rationalized, even though it did upset him a bit.

"Yeah, I know, but still… All this waiting around like this is making me anxious." Goku grumbled bitterly.

"...Oh, I brought you some more clothes, in case you're sent to another hospital." Vegeta said.

"Another?" Goku paused before his eyes lit up. "Wait, you mean they'd actually allow me to wear normal clothes there?"

"Apparently. I'm sure it'll be preferable to the paper gowns they have you wear here."

"You got that right." Goku didn't even hesitate to gripe about it. "This material is so itchy, I hate it."

Vegeta quietly listened to Goku ramble on about anything and everything, staying by his side, until a nurse finally came back offering him to let him take a shower.

Unsurprisingly, he was still to be monitored while showering. And what made it worse was that the shower rooms didn't trap heat like normal bathrooms did, so he was shivering when he finished, but he was grateful to have his hair washed nonetheless.

They allowed him to keep the towel for the time being until his hair had dried off and he was no longer dripping water around.

Vegeta's seat was empty when Goku returned, causing him to look around questionably at the RNA. "Hey, you know where Vegeta went?"

"He said he was going to get something to eat. He should be back shortly." He said.

"Oh, okay." Absent-mindedly, Goku sat back down on the bed, the towel still on his head as he took out his crayons and started doodling something random.

"What are you drawing?" Vegeta's voice interrupted him as he looked over at the paper.

"Vegeta…! You scared me… It's um… Just a dragon…" Goku mumbled.

"Not half bad. It reminds me of Spyro." Vegeta observed with some amusement.

"You're just saying that. It looks like garbage." Goku pouted.

"Heh, if you honestly believe that, then you should see how *I* draw. My art is *nothing* compared to yours." Vegeta said, shamelessly.

"You have a pretty singing voice, though, so… It makes up for it… The only thing I'm good at is fighting… And I can't even handle that much right now." As he was speaking, he accidentally pressed too hard so part of the tip of his crayon broke off.

Vegeta noticed it, but didn't say much. He glanced away briefly at the mention of his singing voice. "That's not true, you have your own qualities, ones that you don't even see."

"Yeah, like what…?" Goku's bangs fell in his face as he lowered his head.

"Well, for starters, the stew you made me yesterday was some of the best I've ever had. I'd like you to cook more for me when you get back."

"You… really liked it that much…?"

"I did. But it's not just that… Remember the stuffed bear you made me on White Day? I could tell you put your heart into sewing that. Even if it meant pricking your fingers with needles a thousand times over. The thing which you fear the most." Vegeta's expression softened.

Goku blushed slightly, lowering his head upon hearing that.

"And the puzzles you like so much too. Or even when you're training and trying to achieve a new form. Hell, when you were in court and you stood your ground in front of everyone. You don't rest until you've finished what you started. That's something I like about you." Vegeta took Goku's hand into his, noticing how bashful he was getting.

"I'm not as amazing as you think I am. I've given up more times than I can even remember. But it was you who always pushed me forward, Vegeta… Despite everything…"

"While it may be true that I've encouraged you to keep fighting, you still made that choice on your own. You're so much stronger than you give yourself credit for. I really admire you, Kakarot."

At that moment, their eyes met and Vegeta tried to convey his feelings in the only way the circumstances would allow him to.

A simple kiss.

"I admire you too, Vegeta… I always have… Ever since I first met you." Goku said softly.

"Che. That's a bold statement. When you first met me, I was trying to kill you, you clown…" Vegeta said with some amusement..

"I know that, but it's… How confident you are… I always respected that about you… If not for you, I don't think… I would have ever come to appreciate my Saiyan origins… I used to be ashamed of my birth name. But meeting you changed that."

"Well, if not for you, I would be dead right now, so…" Vegeta mumbled.

"It's not that big, is it? You've saved me too. Countless times." Goku insisted.

"I know that, but… It's… not just that… You've… got a personality like no other, Kakarot. You're kind and gentle. Funny too. And also… you're one of the only people who have ever touched me without the intention of hurting me. And one day…" Fingers ran up Goku's chest, grazing his neck. "I'd like to return that favor…"

"You mean…" Goku trailed off.

"Yeah…" Vegeta blushed slightly. "I want that too…"

Goku gave a sheepish smile as Vegeta's arm wrapped around his neck, his ears turning red. He looked vulnerable. "I would offer now… but we're kinda in a hospital at the moment, so… I guess we'll hav'ta wait a few weeks…"

His voice was loud enough for only Vegeta to hear.

Vegeta leaned towards him, kissing his cheek. "Count on it."

Goku's heart fluttered at the gesture, wanting so badly to be held and touched by Vegeta more, excitement getting the better of him. He immediately scolded himself for the thought, knowing the situation they were in.

Against their desires to, the two Saiyans- separated themselves, returning their focus to the drawing that Goku was working on.

And yet, for the longest time, neither of the Saiyans could fight off the blushes covering their faces.

…

Later that day, a dietician came in and spoke with Goku about different meal plans, options and more. Goku didn't really understand all of it, but Vegeta *did* and he took in every word, wanting as much information as he could get on what Goku was going through so he would be able to help him in the future.

The talk of food, however, wasn't something Goku wanted to partake in so he had tuned the conversation out.

…

"Son?" A nurse popped her head into the room that evening. It was around 3 pm.

"Huh?" Goku looked up, followed by Vegeta.

"Come on." She said.

"Where to?" Goku wanted to know.

"Your ride is here." She replied, holding up his patient's belonging bag. "We need you to change before you go. But leave your belt and shoe strings in the bag. You can change in the bathroom over there."

"Uh, okay." Goku confusingly grabbed his clothes. When he came out of the room, he saw a couple police officers standing there.

"Is he being transferred?" Vegeta asked.

"Yeah." The nurse answered, grabbing Goku's crayons and paper, as well as the note with Vegeta's number on it.

"Can you tell me where?" Vegeta probed.

"Greenwood Behavioral Health in Nexis City. It's about two hours away from here."

"I see." Vegeta said. It was quite the distance, sure, but for somebody like him, it was no problem at all.

"I can give you the address if you'd like."

"Thanks, but that won't be necessary… As long as I have the name that's all I need."

He walked past her and chose to wait by the bathroom so he could say goodbye.

At long last, Goku came out of the room, grumbling as he tried to hold his pants up. "Ugh, these pants are too big, I could really use my obi right about now…"

"Hey, I'll see you later." Vegeta said as Goku approached him.

"Yeah. I-" Goku cut himself off when Vegeta's lips met his. Knowing they were being watched, his face flushed bright red. "Vegeta…"

"Take care of yourself." Vegeta looked at him painfully.

"I will…" Goku replied, sheepishly.

"I love you." Vegeta murmured into his ear, pulling him into a hug.

"I love you too." Goku hugged him back briefly with one of his arms before pulling away.

That's when one of the policemen came over. "I'm going to have to put you in some handcuffs for the ride there."

"Wait, what are you handcuffing him for?" He demanded defensively, stepping in between the sheriff and Goku. "He hasn't done anything."

"It's alright. It's just standard protocol-" He said vaguely.

"Protocol for what? I-" Vegeta started to protest, but one of the sheriffs placed a hand on his shoulder to get him to move back a bit.

"Sir, you need to relax, we just do this so he can't run off and hurt himself. It's to make sure the transfer goes smoothly, that's all. He's not in any trouble." The man whispered into his ear.

Vegeta calmed down a bit upon hearing that, even though he was still a bit nervous when he saw Goku's distrustful expression.

Goku backed up a bit when the sheriff brushed a hand over his arm in an attempt to handcuff him. "Hey, what are you doing? Stop that, let go of me. I don't want to be touched right now..."

"Kakarot." Vegeta moved over, stopping him from running off just in time. "Listen, it's alright. They're not going to hurt you. But you need to cooperate."

." Goku paused at hearing his words. "Vegeta, why do they want to put handcuffs on me...? They're not taking me to jail, are they? Have I done something wrong...?"

"No... Of course not." Vegeta assured. "They're taking you to another hospital right now and they need to put you in handcuffs so you won't be able to hurt yourself... Can you let them do that?"

Not that handcuffs couldn't easily be broken, but that was the explanation.

"Mn... Okay..." Goku held out his arms and let the officer do his thing.

However, right as he let go of his pants, they started to fall, so Vegeta caught them for him, stopping them just in time. He protectively glared at one of the female nurses who started to stare.

She quickly looked away.

Once Goku was handcuffed, he grabbed his pants again, before the sheriff put shackles on his ankles.

Vegeta couldn't help but feel a bit of sympathy as he watched Goku walk off, desperate to keep his pants from slipping off again. The RNA handed Goku the sticky note with Vegeta's number on it, which he took with a small thanks. The sheriff meanwhile had handled all of Goku's bags with his changes of clothes that Vegeta had brought, as well as his medication.

Vegeta turned to the woman at the desk after he was gone. "Actually, if you don't mind, I'd like to take that address down, after all."

…

Vegeta stepped out of the hospital with his phone in hand. From what he understood, it would be several hours before the police reached their destination, and after that he would probably be strip searched, and placed into one of the units there.

Unlike the ER, however, visiting hours would be limited so it was just a matter of waiting until he received a call.

What he didn't expect, however, was to receive a call right then and there.

"It's Bulma… What could *she* want…?" He wondered, looking down at his screen, before clicking the talk button. "Hello?"

"Yeah, Vegeta? There's something I need to ask you. Do you have a moment?"

"What is it?" Vegeta asked simply.

"Do you know somebody by the name of Atticus…?"

In that moment, Vegeta's blood ran cold at the very mention of the name. He couldn't even respond.

"Vegeta?"

"W-Why are you asking…?! Bulma, tell me, where have you heard that name before…?!" Panic increased by the second.

That was a name he had never wanted to hear again in his life. She didn't need to know the truth. She didn't need to know *anything* . The time he'd spent in the Frieza force wasn't something he wanted to talk about with *anybody* . Even Goku only knew so much.

"Well, some guy is here… and his spaceship's in need of repairs. He says he knows you, and he wants to know if he could stay with you until I'm done with them? And also… He mentioned something… about you owing him some sort of favor."

Vegeta's breath caught in his throat. He fell against the car, clutching at his chest as he gasped for air.

That sick… bastard…! He's talking about ***Bulma*** *…!*

He's threatening her life to get to me.

*I don't go there now, he's going to **kill** her.*

"Listen, tell him I said yes, I'll be there as fast as I can, okay? I'm headed there now…!"

Of course, Vegeta *wanted* to say no. He would prefer nothing more than to pretend that part of his past didn't exist. And ignore it.

But the one thing stopping him was Bulma. Just knowing that she was in the presence of somebody who was volatile and manic. Somebody who even himself had a hard time handling. He had to *separate* them.

He couldn't risk her getting hurt, or worse.

"Alright, I have some things I need to get back to, but I'll have him wait at the front of the building."

Steeling himself for the situation he was risking by saying yes, he said his goodbyes. As Vegeta heard the click of the phone, he just barely resisted the urge to smash his phone.

Damn it all!

Why is this happening to me…?

*Of all the times, why the hell did he have to show up **now** ?*

What's he after…?

Did he just come here to mess with me again?

Knowing him… Probably…

After a long moment, he let out a sigh.

His hands were shaking.

Well, at least Kakarot's safe… For now, anyway…

…

Atticus was a middle aged looking man(although he was actually over 100 years old.) who stood 7 foot tall. He had spiky red hair, pinkish skin, and small horns that stuck out of the sides of his head as well as a furry red tail that flipped around his backside. Clearly an alien from outer space.

As his uniform implied, he used to be in the Frieza force, but he had left on a mission one day and went into hiding, never to be seen again, until now.

As soon as Vegeta saw him, disgust consumed him.

"Vegeta…" The man spoke in a surprisingly soft voice as he approached him, almost as if in disbelief. "It's really you… I'm so glad…"

Vegeta said nothing, freezing up when he was pulled into the man's arms. Even as Atticus pulled away and touched his face, Vegeta still said nothing.

"It's been so long… How have you been…?" Atticus asked.

"I'm fine." Vegeta spoke simply. Quietly. Not wanting to cause a scene. "Come on. We're leaving. Did you ever learn how to fly?"

"Fly? Like… with a *spaceship* , or…?" Atticus looked confused.

"No, I mean *fly* . As in… this." Vegeta clarified, hovering in the air.

"Oh…" Atticus paused. "No… I don't know how to do that…"

How the hell does he not know how to fly by now? Of all the-

"Tch… Forget it, we'll just use a capsule car." Vegeta had no interest in carrying him around, so he took the capsule out of his uniform and pressed the button, tossing it out in front of him. "Get in."

Vegeta sent Bulma a quick message saying, *"He's with me. I'm going now."*

When he looked up, Atticus seemed to be struggling with figuring the machine out for a moment, before finally succeeding in opening the door and sitting down in the passenger's seat.

Vegeta took his own spot in the driver's seat before starting up the car. "Put your seatbelt on."

"My… what?"

"Your *seatbelt* . For fucks sake, it's behind you." Vegeta had to point to it. "You see that thing sticking out of the wall next to the window? Yes, *that* , pull it out."

"Uh, okay, like that?" Atticus did as told.

"Yes, now stick it in this." Vegeta instructed him, sighing when he figured it out.

Finally... He turned his attention back to in front of him until he felt a hand running up his thigh.

"I missed you, Vegeta…" Atticus said. "I heard you fought Frieza. I'm glad you're alive. He could have killed you..."

"He did." Vegeta admitted in a low voice. "Twice. They resurrected me…"

"Resurrected you, how?" Atticus inquired.

"Once with the Dragon Balls and the other time with a Temporal Do-Over. It was an angel." Vegeta replied curtly.

"A real life angel, huh? Sounds awesome." Much to Vegeta's chagrin, the touching continued, a hand brushing against his crotch.

Grabbing his hand, he freed himself of the touch. "Stop that. I have a *partner* now, Atticus. We can't *do* this."

"Why not…?" Atticus looked at him.

"Because it's wrong." Vegeta bit his lip, trying to keep his emotions in check.

"...Hm… You say that, but I can tell that you've missed me too… Otherwise… Your body wouldn't be responding to me this way… After all, you *like* it when I touch you, *don't* you, Vegeta…?" Once again, the man tried to reach out and grope him.

"Get off of me." Vegeta said in a strained voice, pushing his hand way away. "We're in the car right now…"

"Fine, we'll do it later, then. I promise I'll make you feel good… Just like I did before. You remember, don't you…? When you cried out my name for the first time…? It made me so happy." Atticus spoke.

Vegeta tried to ignore it, but his stomach turned. Of course he remembered. That was something he could *never* forget. Being raped as a child repeatedly by somebody who was much larger and stronger than he was, not a single person stepping in to help him.

A wave of nausea passed over him and yet he said nothing.

If he tries anything, then I'll knock him out. I'm probably stronger than he is now, so I should have no problem defending myself. And besides, it's only for a few weeks. After that, I'll make him leave.

That was the only rationalization he could come up with to calm down. Telling himself that he was the one in control, it gave him a sense of security which he so desperately needed right now, especially without Goku around.

Then again, he could just be concealing his power level… If that's the case, then…

What can I do… to save myself?

…

"...And this is where you'll be sleeping. It's kind of small, but as a bedroom it should suffice." Vegeta later found himself explaining, after having shown Atticus around the house.

"I've been sleeping in a spaceship on a hard floor for the past couple months, so this is perfect actually." Atticus said, taking note of the bed.

"Good. Now, if you don't mind, I'm going to go train for a while. Don't bother me." Vegeta muttered. Grabbing the capsule on the shelf that was dedicated to the gravity chamber, he walked back outside, and popped it open. He entered almost immediately, locking the door behind him.

Finally, in that moment, he could breathe.

Finally, he had some space away from wandering hands that didn't know the meaning of personal space or boundaries.

It was only at that moment that Vegeta realized he was scared. And more vulnerable than he ever wanted to admit.

But he wasn't a child anymore and nor was he weak. He could handle this.

Turning on the gravity and bots, he began to train until his entire body was sore and covered in sweat. In the end, he finally collapsed due to exhaustion.

As he laid on the floor, he stared at the ceiling, trying to regain his breath. Already, his thoughts were wandering off again. Back to the way Atticus had touched him earlier.

It was only briefly, but it kept replaying in his head over and over again.

The urge to kill him was so strong he could barely stand it. But the urge to avoid him was even stronger, leaving him at a stand still.

This wasn't like the hate he had for Frieza, it was so much more complicated than that.

"After all, you like it when I touch you, don't you Vegeta…?"

Shut up… get out of my head…!

He turned over on his side, swallowing back the lump that had formed in his throat.

He had to clear his mind.

Getting up, he stumbled out of the gravity chamber, before heading back into the house. He grabbed some clothes from his bedroom and started to head straight to the shower.

RAPE SCENE AHEAD

He was unsurprised when he saw Atticus in the hallway.

"There you are. Finished training?"

"Yeah. I need to take a shower." Vegeta tried walking past him, but before he could, the larger man pulled him into his arms, reeking of booze. He had apparently gone through the fridge.

"Hey-! Let go of me!" Vegeta snapped. He tried to pull away but the grip on him was too strong.

There was no doubt in his mind now that Atticus was holding back his power level, this strength, it was *unreal* .

"You're so cute. I wanna make you cum for me again. Can I? It'll feel good." Atticus slurred, reaching a hand into his pants.

"Damn it, Atticus, I told you to stop touching me…! I have a partner now, remember…?" Vegeta hissed.

"Maybe so, but you're still hard, right? So let's do it. As long as I can get this kind of reaction from you, that's all I care about."

Vegeta's breath caught in his throat when Atticus bit down on his neck, his other hand working its way up into his shirt and teasing at the lumps of flesh on his chest, which were so small in comparison.

"Ahh…!" In that moment, something inside of Vegeta snapped, a hardwired fear consuming him. He wasn't being listened to.

It was just like before. A disconnect - His mind telling him to run, but his body remaining frozen. He couldn't move.

He was terrified.

Maybe it was because he had known this man since he was just a boy, hardwired by him to obey.

The very thought sickened him, realizing that weakness was still a part of him.

"You're wet. I can feel it. So much precum…" Atticus stroked him. "You're enjoying this, aren't you, Vegeta…?"

"No. I'm not." A lump formed in Vegeta's throat, shame consuming him.

"Stop lying to yourself. A dick doesn't get hard and wet like this unless you're aroused. You want me. Admit it."

"The only person I want is *him* , I have no interest in you. Stop it…!" Vegeta tried to fight back but as Atticus dragged him into the bedroom and pushed him down against the bed, he found that his will to fight back was gone. Not because he didn't want to, but because he was scared.

"Stop struggling, and do what I say!" Atticus snapped. "I'll prove to you that I'm a much better lay than he is."

Over and over and again, the voices in his head screamed at him to defend himself, and yet, as his clothes were ripped off, he could do nothing except beg. "No. Atticus, please, don't do this. Atticus-
"

"Hey. Shh… Just relax. I'm not going to hurt you. I'm going to make you feel good, just like I said I would. As long as you cooperate. Trust me…" A hand caressed his cheek before pinning Vegeta down by his wrists.

"Please… Don't, I-ah!" Pain shot up Vegeta's backside, his breath catching in his throat.

In that moment, he was no longer in the comfort of his own home. He was back on Frieza's ship.

A child.

At the mercy of a monster.

Arms pinning him to the floor like an animal.

He couldn't move.

He was crying.

And helpless.

It's just like it was before…

Vegeta shouted, finally breaking down in tears as the larger man thrusted into him. His nails dug into his palms in an attempt to distract himself to no avail.

"That's it, Vegeta… Just let it go. You want this as much as I do. I know you do. I can tell… This feels good, doesn't it?" Atticus whispered, going deeper and deeper by the moment, satisfied when Vegeta began to writhe underneath him.

"Kakarot…" The name rolled off Vegeta's tongue without him even thinking. He was crying, his body begging him to let go, to give in. *"I need you…"*

He fought with every bit of power he had to reject his arousal, ashamed of himself for not being stronger. He couldn't allow himself to react this way to another man that wasn't Goku. That was paramount to cheating, even if it *was* rape.

But, in the end, it happened despite his every wish to stop it. Cum shot out of him, filling him with a sense of shame like never before.

You unfaithful whore.

In a flash, Atticus released inside of him, pulling out and falling asleep due to his drunken stupor.

RAPE SCENE END

Vegeta was left sobbing. He was humiliated. He had lost control *again* , just like back *then* .

*What the hell is **wrong** with me?*

*Why did I just **freeze** up like that?*

*I should have fought back **harder** .*

*...No, I **did** try, but he was **too powerful…***

"You're wet. I can feel it. So much precum… You're enjoying this, aren't you, Vegeta…?"

Touching the cum on his stomach, he felt bile rise to his throat. With the reminder of his weakness in his fingers, he cried even harder, his vision blurring.

Damn him .

Getting up and grabbing his phone, he stumbled into the bathroom desperate to wash himself off, trying his best to wipe away the tears falling down his face.

All those times he had told Goku that a person couldn't help how their body responds, and yet here he was, cursing himself all over again for not being able to control his own reaction.

What he had forgotten was that he had asked Bulma to remove the lock on the door. Making that realization left him feeling vulnerable, knowing that Atticus could waltz in any time he wanted.

So he did all he could think of. He lifted a shelf and stuck it in front of the door. Not that it would actually do anything.

Placing his phone on the side of the bathtub, he turned on the shower, proceeding to undress and step under the water which he had set as hot as possible.

Grabbing a rag, he lathered soap into it, scrubbing himself with it until his skin was raw.

Memory after memory kept flashing through his head all over and over again.

"A dick doesn't get hard unless you're aroused. You want me. Admit it ."

Out…

Get out …

I need him out.

His throat burned, and his body was sore. To make matters worse, he was bleeding. No surprise there since Atticus hadn't even had the decency to prepare him first.

He tossed the rag to the side, before washing his hair in an emotional frenzy. He then plugged the drain, turning on the bath faucet.

At long last, he slipped into the water, closing his eyes as it filled up around him. The hot water felt nice.

Truthfully, Vegeta didn't take baths often, that was something Goku usually preferred to do. But on the rarest of occasions, he needed it to unwind.

Although that was hard right now, since he had invited a rapist into his house.

Breathing in and out through his nose, his eye caught the necklace that Goku had given him back at the festival. He took it into his hands and held it tightly to his chest. *Just breathe.*

Eventually he picked back up his phone, turning on the screen and gazing through DMs. Krillin had messaged him(yes, at some point he had taken down his number, believe it or not).

The message was old, though. He sort of felt bad for having forgotten to respond.

"How's Goku doing? Is he any better? I haven't heard from him in a while."

Pausing, he wondered if he should tell him.

Krillin was Goku's best friend. It only seemed right that he should know. And yet this wasn't a boundary Vegeta was sure he should be treading on. ***"Well, he's alive, if that's what you're wondering."***

"Very funny, Vegeta. But you know what I meant." The response came only a moment later.

"Fine. He's in the hospital. Satisfied?" Vegeta didn't particularly like the prying but knew he had brought it on himself.

"Yes, actually. But what happened?"

Vegeta paused. Goku had cut Krillin off. That was, of course, his choice not to get him involved if he didn't want him to be.

"It's a personal matter. I'm sorry, but I'm not at liberty to give you the exact details right now."

"Mental health related, I take it…?"

"How did you know?"

"I've been around long enough to know what a phrase like that means, Vegeta. Especially with somebody like Goku. I won't ask you to talk about it, but let him know I'm worried about him. We all are…"

"Yeah. I'll do that."

*"On another note, how are *you* doing?"*

"I'm fine." The response was curt. A lie.

He had barely managed to stop crying.

"You sure? I get the feeling you're just saying that to stop me from worrying about you. He is your partner, after all. So it's okay to be upset. You can be honest about it. I'm not going to judge you."

"Honest? You want me to be honest? I feel like I'm going crazy, Krillin. I'm trying my best to help him, but all I've been doing is making everything worse. I feel like shit for abandoning him like that. You know how much he hates hospitals. He's probably scared right now."

Keep the focus on Goku.

Nobody needs to know.

*"You haven't *abandoned* him, though. There's nothing wrong with seeking out professional help every now and then. Goku just needs some extra support right now and that's okay. You haven't done anything wrong. In my own career, I too have had to admit people to the hospital more times than I care to admit for many of the same reasons. What Goku's struggling with, that's not always something that a partner or friend can manage alone. You get what I'm saying?"*

Vegeta swallowed at seeing the message.

"I think so."

"Listen, all that's important right now is making sure Goku gets the care he needs. If that help has to come through hospitalization, then so be it. As long as you visit him and talk to him, I think he'll be just fine."

"Thanks."

"It's no problem. I've got to get back to work but feel free to message me any time and keep me updated, okay?"

"Yeah…"

"I-" He started to type the words but stopped when the phone started to ring. He didn't recognize the number so he could only assume it to be Goku.

"Hello?" When he answered, however, the phone cut off for some reason.

For a long moment he wondered if it could have been a telemarketer but he pressed past his hesitation and called back.

"Hello?" It was Goku. He sounded like he was crying.

"Kakarot?"

"Vegeta, hey…" More sniffling.

"Why are you crying?" Vegeta asked, a bit worried.

"It's the phone… It cut me off, said I had to pay to call out… I didn't have any money on me, so I was worried I wouldn't get to talk to you… But it worked for some reason when you called back… They said I have ten minutes I can talk to you and then I have to give the phone over to another patient."

"I see. Well, at least you have *some* time." Vegeta could tell he was emotional, so he tried to handle the situation with care. "So how are you feeling…?"

"I-I'm okay. I'd rather be with you right now, though. I don't really like it here. They had me do a physical earlier where I had to strip down naked in front of several guys, guess they were checkin' for weapons or sharp objects or something. And after that, some lady had to take some blood work from me too. She kept pricking me in different spots cuz she couldn't find a good vein. My arm is all bruised because of her. My roommate said they do that every morning, drawin' blood from patients, I mean. Can't say I'm really lookin' forward to all that."

"I can imagine. I know how terrified you are of needles... Still… has anything positive happened?"

"Well, they did let me go to the gym earlier with the group. They apparently have one here. It's fairly small, but I thought it was pretty nice. I played this game called ping pong earlier with one of the patients. I kept winning though, so he eventually got angry and quit."

Vegeta couldn't help but laugh a bit at that. "Too good for him, huh? Well, I wouldn't have picked just anybody to be my partner. It's his own fault for underestimating a Saiyan."

"...I'd… like to play ping pong with you too, one day."

Vegeta's eyes widened at hearing that. He then smiled softly. "When you get better, we will."

"Another dietician talked with me earlier about food plans and liquid diets I could focus on to work my way back up to eatin' solids again. They said it could take a few weeks before then, though."

"Well, that's not too bad. Could be worse. Do you know when visiting hours are? I want to come and see you." Vegeta murmured.

"O-Oh, right. It's Tuesdays and Thursdays. Um, hey, what was the time for visiting hours again…? 3 Pm…? It's 3pm. 3 to 4. Also, they said you'd need my patient code to be able to see me. I can give it to you."

"Alright. Just give me a second." The best thing he could do was pull up notes on his phone, turning on the speaker. "I'm ready."

"It's uh… 348."

"3…4…8… Got it. I'll see you Tuesday then, yeah…?" Vegeta noted aloud.

"Y-Yeah…" There seemed to be some hesitation from Goku's end.

"What's wrong…? It's only a few days…" Vegeta tried to reassure him. He knew how alone Goku must have felt particularly because of how much he hated hospitals.

"I know, but… it's only a couple hours a week *..."*

"Maybe, but you'll be able to call me every day, though, right?"

*"Yeah, for like **ten minutes** ... That's not the same. I wanna be with you."* Goku's voice was weak.

"Kakarot…" Vegeta had to bite his lip to stop himself from breaking down at hearing that. "I want you here too… But I need you to get better first. You know that, right?"

"I know... I just... really miss you right now."

"...I miss you too." Vegeta said softly. The truth was, he craved Goku's warmth right now more than he ever wanted to admit. To have him by his side, that's all he needed. "I know this is hard for you, but just try to hang in there. For me."

"I will... "

"By the way, did you ever get to change into something better fitting? Your pants were on the verge of falling off of you earlier." Vegeta mused.

"Well, I ended up tying it with a sock to hold it up. I'm still waiting for them to bring me back my clothes." Vegeta could hear a small pout in that. *"I think they were planning on washing them or something first."*

"I see… And what about your medication?"

"The nurse said she's gonna give it to me in about an hour from now."

"Oh. That's good. You said you had a roommate. What's he like?"

"...He's… kinda strange, but he seems pretty easy to get along with. Although I'm still not very happy about having to share a room with another guy who's not you, y'know…?"

"I understand." Vegeta did, all too well. He didn't even feel safe in his own house right now.

For the next few minutes, Vegeta listened to him ramble on about his day, finding it much too soon when Goku said it was time to get off off the phone.

"Sorry. They said I gotta go."

"Oh. Okay." Vegeta swallowed.

"I love you."

At hearing those simple words, something inside of Vegeta just broke, the flashbacks consuming him.

He tried to fight off Atticus's voice in his head, the memory of how his body had reacted.

Unfaithful.

Unfaithful.

Unfaithful.

Unfaithful.

Unfaithful.

The word in his head replayed like a mantra.

I should have been stronger, I should have fought back harder, but I didn't…

Kakarot trusted me, and yet I betrayed him.

I cheated on him with ***another man*** *.*

No, it wasn't ***consensual*** *. I told him to* ***stop*** *.*

But I still let it happen.

No, I did ***try*** *to fight, but he was too strong.*

I was weaker than him.

Excuses *.*

"Vegeta…?"

"I love you too." His response was delayed.

I don't deserve him.

"I'll… call you tomorrow."

"Yeah. I'll look forward to it."

"G'night."

"Goodnight, Kakarot. Get some rest."

Clicking off the phone, Vegeta leaned his head back against the bathtub wall.

The water was still hot, so, even if only for a little while, he could enjoy a moment of peace.

Slowly, thoughts of his mate filled his head.

His sweet smile.

His blush.

His laughter.

Even his scent and the sensation of his skin.

Desires and urges which he suddenly felt ashamed for.

He curled in on himself, burying his face in his arms.

His shoulders were shaking. *"Kakarot… I'm sorry…"*

…

Goku clicked off the phone, handing it to another patient before walking off and sitting down next to a couple guys who were watching TV.

It had been a grueling unpleasant day, one of the worst in his life.

Maybe he wouldn't have had a huge issue with being separated from Vegeta otherwise, but this was a hospital, and he was surrounded by strangers. He didn't want to be here.

He let out a sigh.

"Goku?"

"Huh?" He looked up to see that one of the staff members were talking to him.

"Are you coming?" She asked.

He had been so out of it, that he didn't process the fact that most of patients had left the room.

"Coming where?"

"To the cafeteria. It's time for snacks." She said.

"Oh. I'm not really hungry, but I guess I'll go." He got up, following after her.

They had to walk down multiple hallways to reach the cafeteria, one woman scanning her card to open the doors.

They had various snack items, including fruit, juice, milk, crackers and other things.

He just grabbed an apple juice and a cup of apple sauce.

He didn't know if he'd be able to stomach it, but it was practically liquid so maybe it would be fine. He knew he needed to try. For Vegeta.

Plus, the dietician had even *suggested* apple sauce as an option.

He headed over to an empty table opening up the cup of apple sauce. Spooning some of it out, he hesitantly stuck it in his mouth. The flavor in this one was extra sweet for some reason.

It was good.

Slowly, he swallowed.

Bit by bit until the cup was empty.

After that, he drank the juice.

He found that it was surprisingly easier to keep down than expected, even if there was some minor nausea. It wasn't like the soups he'd been eating which had chunks in it.

That's when he heard somebody sit down next to him.

It was his roommate.

They hadn't really spoken much. The only exchange they had really had was Goku complaining about the blood work they had done then him responding, *"Well, you had better get used to it. They do that every morning."* before he laid back down.

Goku didn't comment at first, the guy didn't seem to want to say anything.

But then in a low voice, he spoke. "That's really all you're eating? A cup of apple sauce?"

"I can't stomach much more." Goku said, vaguely.

"Oh…" the guy replied, curtly.

"By the way, I never got your name… What was it?" Goku asked.

"...It's Marsh." The other man muttered.

"Marsh, huh? I'm Goku."

"I see." Marsh replied.

"So if you don't mind my asking, what are you here for…?" Goku wanted to know.

"That's none of your business." Marsh growled out.

"Oh, right. Sorry. I have a lot of things I don't wanna talk about either." Goku giggled nervously. "Sometimes, I forget what's appropriate or not."

"Tch." Marsh scoffed.

Goku felt a bit insecure after that, but didn't say anything further, not wanting to upset him more.

…

When snack time was over, the nurse gave Goku his medication before he went into his room and closed the door, turning on the bathroom light as a night light.

Marsh was already in bed.

"You don't seem to be much of a people person." Goku noted, sitting down on his bed.

"I'm not." Marsh snorted. "Why? Does that bother you?"

"No. It's just... You remind me a little bit of my partner." Goku reflected with a gentle expression.

"Well, great, cuz you remind me of mine and he's annoying. He's the idiot who admitted me here." Marsh growled.

Goku paused at hearing that. "I didn't know…"

"Well, now you do. So leave me alone." Marsh looked away, bitterly.

"My partner admitted me here too… But he did it cuz he was worried about me…" Goku pressed forward.

"Bullshit. He probably just did it because he got tired of dealing with you, like mine did…" Marsh retorted.

"...I can't say I know exactly what you're going through, but if he's anything like me as you say he is, then… maybe he wants to help you and just didn't know how…"

"I never *asked* for his help." Marsh retorted. "He should have minded his own business like I told him to. If I choose to hurt myself, that's *my* business, not *his* ..."

"Well," Goku wanted to ask the details but could tell he wasn't going to get any answers. "There's nothing wrong with needing support every now and then. That's something I've had to learn myself. With Vegeta…"

"...I noticed your scars. You cut yourself too?" Marsh inquired after a long moment of silence, glancing back over at him again.

"Yeah… sometimes… I haven't really had a relapse in a while though…" Goku admitted.

"What's your story…? Why did you cut?" Marsh asked.

"You first…" Goku pressed. He knew he might not get a chance to hear anything if he didn't.

Marsh sighed after a moment. "Fine… It's my father, he would get drunk and do things to me… things that no father should even *think* of doing… I never reported him. I don't even want to. I'd rather just stay away. Makes it easier for all of us..."

"That's awful… I'm sorry… You didn't deserve that, especially not from a parent." Goku wasn't sure how else to respond. It was nauseating to think about. He would never even think of doing something like that to Gohan and Goten.

"Yeah, well, now it's your turn. What's a guy like you doing in here anyways…?" Marsh asked.

"...I was raped." Goku said.

"By who…?" Marsh seemed to hesitate after that.

"Didn't know him." Goku looked down.

"Did you report?" Marsh wanted to know.

"Yeah. He's in jail right now." Goku confirmed.

"For how long?" Marsh inquired.

"Ten years." The words came out more painfully than Goku had anticipated.

"Only ten?" Marsh looked disgusted. "I swear, this system is messed up. That's one of the reasons why I never told anyone."

"...I moved because of that. I don't want to be in the same city as him when he gets out."

"I don't blame you…" Marsh murmured. "Sometimes… when men go through that… they're not… taken seriously. So… the punishment is usually less severe than it would be if the victim were a woman. Penis in vagina and penis in anus are regarded as two different crimes. If they even *get* a case that is."

"They called it Quasi Rape because of that and because I was drugged when it happened…" Goku rubbed the fabric of his pants.

"What kind of logic *is* that? Shouldn't that make it *worse* ? I mean… if you were drugged, you couldn't even fight back..."

"I know, that's the whole point. They… say… if you don't fight back," Goku hesitated before continuing. "then you must have consented."

"That's bullshit and I hope you know that. Because they're *wrong*... Goku…" Marsh said with unexpected sincerity. "You didn't consent to anything. You couldn't have."

"I'm still trying to wrap my head around that. The reasons I froze up and trusted him. I was vulnerable at the time…"

"Freezing up is normal, even without being drugged. It happened to me too. So you can't blame yourself. It isn't your fault."

"...Man, you really do remind me of him." Goku laughed, wiping away the tears that had formed. "Of Vegeta, I mean."

"Tch. Well, I'd certainly hope that's a good thing." Marsh smirked.

"Believe me, it is. He's kinda the only reason I'm still alive." Goku smiled softly.

"Is that so? He must really care about you." Marsh remarked.

"He does. But at the same time, I can't stop worrying about him, y'know…? Even though he's been through something similar to what I have, he doesn't like talkin' about it very much. Yet I kinda get why… I'm the same way…"

"Hmph… Well, if I was him, I'd probably tell you to get some rest."

"Hehe, you're right. He would. Thanks… Marsh." Goku said, awkwardly, laying down.

"Don't mention it, Goku." Marsh turned over, soon after dozing off.

It wasn't long after that that Goku did as well.

…

5:00 AM

Marsh hadn't been joking when he said the staff would draw blood in the mornings.

All he could remember was being dead asleep, then out of nowhere being woken up by a sharp pain in his arm. It was one of the most irritating experiences possible and of course he lashed out.

He couldn't help it. It was a knee jerk reaction, but their own fault for not giving him any kind of warning first or trying to make sure he was actually awake.

Soon after, he fell back asleep.

7:30 AM

He was woken up again and asked if he wanted to go down to the cafeteria for breakfast. He said no, because he was too tired. His medication always made him feel that way in the mornings.

Marsh, however, apparently *had* left.

9:00 AM

Goku was dragged out of bed by a staff member who wanted to take his vitals, before he was given an option to take a shower, which he turned down, because, once again, all he wanted to do was sleep.

10:00 AM

He was invited out for some kind of process group. He didn't fall back asleep after this, due to having been woken back up repeatedly, but he was still out of it so he ignored her.

11:00 AM .

A weekend doctor came to see him, asking a lot of questions about how he was doing, mainly physically. Many he forgot and, others, well, really, it was just repeating the same stuff he had

already said over and over again by now.

11:30 AM

A social worker and therapist spoke to him.

More questions, this time about his mental wellbeing and what had brought him here.

They offered to help find him a therapist in his area, one who specialized in dealing with eating disorders and self-harm.

Of course, that could take up to several weeks, all things considered.

He was grateful nonetheless, some part of him having finally acknowledged that he needed professional help right now.

12:45 PM

The unit was sent down for lunch.

Goku decided to join them this time, but stuck to eating apple sauce again.

2:00 PM

Another group. This one he joined.

It was art therapy. They made a small bird house.

He didn't care much for it, but he figured it was better than doing nothing, so he participated.

3:00 PM

Marsh and him played ping pong in the gym. Unlike the last guy, he actually provided a challenge. Goku liked that.

He took a note that he'd like to do it again when he came back.

4:00 PM

The last group of the day.

They talked about triggers and coping mechanisms.

Goku didn't really say much, but he did listen, mainly to the stories that other patients had to share.

One of the suggestions for healthy coping mechanisms was to write in a journal.

But Goku had already made up his mind that he hated writing, so he ignored it.

…

5:00 PM

It was dinner.

Goku had a protein shake added to his meal due to word from the doctor.

As for food however, he turned it down this time.

Fortunately, the protein shake would still at least provide him with some nutrients, so the staff didn't say much. Even keeping the apple sauce down earlier had provided enough of a challenge.

5:45 PM:

The unit watched a movie.

Some kind of horror movie.

Goku had seen much scarier stuff in his lifetime, however, so he ended up finding himself laughing at it, while everybody else was scared out of their wits.

Marsh scoffed at the whole thing, not seeming too impressed with it either.

7:00 PM:

His approved items were finally brought back to his room and everybody was given the option to bathe.

Well, more like shower, because they didn't have bathtubs.

Due to their bathroom being shared, Marsh took his shower first, before letting Goku take his.

Goku quickly found himself reminded once again how much he hated hospital bathrooms. They were cold, this one especially because the space under the door was so large. He knew why of course.

At the very least, he was grateful to finally be able to change into pants that he didn't have to pull up every fifteen seconds. Frustratingly enough, they still didn't allow him to have his armbands, but Vegeta had apparently sent him a loose, long sleeve shirt, so, even though his preference was short sleeves, he still found it to be more comforting to have coverage over his scars.

Right as he was getting dressed, he suddenly picked up on the sound of shouting.

"Hey, what's going on?" He started to leave the room to see what the commotion was about, but right as he did, a chair was sent flying in his direction, hitting him directly in the face.

"Ow! That hurt!" He was knocked back, rubbing his nose and forehead in pain.

"Hey, are you okay?" Marsh ran over to his side.

"Yeah, I'm fine, but… What-" Goku looked back up, startled when he saw the other patient already had another chair in hand.

"I don't want to be here. Let me go home!" The man shouted, in tears.

"Kumqua... You need to relax." A nurse approached him.

"Don't tell me to relax! Let me out of here!" Kumqua shouted, continuing his outburst.

"He gets like this every night. Come on, let's go back in our room. Goku? You idiot, what are you doing?" Marsh hissed when Goku got up and started approaching him despite the staff's warning to go back to his room.

"Get back!" Kumqua tossed another chair at Goku, but everybody in the room seemed shocked when he caught it with ease.

"Hey, just calm down. I'm not your enemy." He placed it on the floor, approaching him.

"I said get back! This is none of your business, so butt out!" Once again, Kumqua grabbed another chair, but Goku took hold of it before it could be thrown. Through sheer physical strength, Goku had already won.

"I won't. Not until you stop this." Goku said firmly, his expression unwavering.

Slowly, Kumqua did as told, knowing he didn't have an option.

"There you go. See, now that wasn't so hard, was it?" Goku grinned.

"Don't patronize me." Kumqua spat, glaring at him.

"I'm not. Now listen. You said you want to go home, right?" Goku murmured. "Well, threatening others isn't the answer to that. You could have seriously injured somebody just now… and then what would you have done?"

"Tch, it's so easy for you to give people lectures, isn't it? You've only been here for a day. I've been here for over *three months* now."

"I-" Goku started to speak back up but was cut off by a nurse.

"Goku, you need to go back to your room. We'll handle this."

"But-"

"Now."

"Fine…" Goku reluctantly listened, following Marsh back into the room.

"You're such a moron. Do you have any clue how that could have backfired on you?" Marsh berated him once they got inside.

"I'd have been fine. I had it handled." Goku rationalized.

"Handled my *ass* . You just got socked in the face with a chair. What the hell's the matter with you? This isn't the place to be playing heroics. That guy's a *lunatic* , that's exactly why he's here. He can't control himself. And like I said, he does this every other night."

"...Still, I feel kinda bad for him. He said he's been here three months now…" Goku looked down a bit.

"Yeah, because he *can't control himself* . God, how many times do I have to repeat that…?"

"I'm sorry. Just… don't yell at me, okay?"

Marsh sighed. "Look. Just… You'd do better to avoid him when he's like that. For your own sake. He's not stable. My dad… Had outbursts like that too. I don't like being around it."

"...Marsh-" Goku seemed at a loss for words as he said that.

"Goku?" A woman's voice cut him off.

"Huh?" Goku looked over at the door to see the nurse.

"Are you alright?" She asked. "Any pain in your head or face."

"Nah, I'm good." Goku shrugged.

"You sure?" She asked.

"Yeah. It hurts a little, but I'll be fine." Goku assured her.

"Just checking. Let me know if you need anything, alright?" She replied.

"I will." He said as she left the room.

Marsh was already laying down when Goku turned around.

Goku almost wanted to say something, but could tell he needed to be left alone right now.

This had apparently brought back bad memories for the other man, and he didn't want to tread on that.

8:00 PM

Goku was one of the first ones to ask to use the phone that evening.

He couldn't be more excited to hear from Vegeta.

Dialing out, the same thing happened as it did last time. It cut off, so Vegeta had to call back.

It took a moment though.

"Hello?"

"Vegeta, hey…"

"Hey…"

This time it was Goku who noticed sniffling on the other line. Vegeta's voice sounded strained.

"What's wrong?" Goku asked, worry consuming him.

"Oh, uh, it's nothing. How's your day been?"

Goku almost wanted to question him further but in the end, he didn't press it. "It's been alright. They're planning on hooking me up with a therapist in our area."

"That'll be good. You need as much support as you can get right now."

"Yeah… Also… I ate some apple sauce earlier. It wasn't much, but it's easier on my stomach than other stuff is right now."

"And you kept it down?"

"Mhm."

"That's better than starving yourself at least… I'm proud of you…"

Goku's heart fluttered when he heard that, his cheeks turning slightly red.

"I played ping pong again. This time it was with my roommate. He actually gave me a bit of a challenge unlike that other guy. He reminds me a bit of you."

He knew he kept changing conversations right and left, but Vegeta was long since aware of how he could be, so he didn't seem to mind.

"Is that so? Well, I hope you're not trying to make me jealous now." Vegeta was clearly just teasing him.

"I'm not." Goku smiled. "He apparently has a partner as well. Although earlier, I kinda got hit in the face with a chair. He was pretty worried about me."

*"Hit in the face with a **chair** ? By who?"*

"It was one of the patients. He was upset and wanted to go home. So he started throwing chairs around." Goku murmured.

"That seems like a sure fire way to get what he wants." Vegeta's voice dripped with sarcasm.

"Yeah, I tried to talk to him, but the staff made me go back to my room."

"Let me guess. You tried to play the hero again, didn't you?"

"No, I just couldn't stand by and watch while he was threatening other patients like that. So I grabbed the chair from him."

"...Tch. Typical. As soon as you see somebody in danger, you just have to go and rescue them, don't you?"

"You know me… I can't really consider myself a hero, but I don't like seein' people get hurt either… You think that's strange…?" Goku mused, twisting the phone cord.

"Strange for a Saiyan maybe, but it's not necessarily a bad thing. That meddlesome nature of yours is something I like about you…"

"I guess I should be honored then…" Goku noted.

*"You had **better** be. I'm not the type of person who hands out compliments very often…"*

"Yeah…" Goku pondered it with a small surge of pride. Vegeta seemed to have that impact on him a lot lately. "Oh, we made bird houses today. They wouldn't let me take it back here though because it has a string on it. I'll show it to you when I get out."

"Alright. Hey…"

"Hm?"

*"...You know I… love you, right…? That I'd… never do **anything** to intentionally betray you…"*

Goku could hear the hesitation on the other end. Something was definitely bothering Vegeta, but what?

"Of course you wouldn't. Vegeta… Is this… about you sending me here? I know you only did that because you're worried about me. If I was in your situation, I'd have probably done the same thing…"

"...Yeah… right…"

Vegeta's response was once again delayed, but assuming he was just worried that he was mad over the hospital ordeal, he didn't bother prying into it.

He just needed some time to calm down.

Or that least that's what he tried to tell himself.

"So how have *you* been…?" He continued the conversation, trying to think of anything little thing he could think of to keep Vegeta distracted.

"I'm alright. Just been doing some training today. And sorting out the house. There's still a lot of unpacking that I need to take care of. I want everything to be in order for when you get back."

"Aw, Vegeta, You don't need to do everything at once. I wouldn't have minded helping you."

"It's alright. I want you to focus on your own problems and leave the more difficult stuff to me. I'll handle it."

"You sound tired. I'm worried you're gonna overwork yourself."

"A little bit of house work isn't going to kill me."

"No, maybe not, but if you're overdoing it when you're training on top of that, then that isn't healthy."

"Stop worrying, I said I'm fine."

"Vegeta…"

" *Vegeta nothing . Your job right now is to* heal . *That's all I want you focused to, until you get better. Got it?"*

"..Okay… If you say so." Goku caved, giving in. "I really miss you right now… I wanna hug you…"

"You'll get to hug me on Tuesday..."

"I know…" Goku pouted. "But still… I wanna hug you *now* . And kiss you too… I usually don't feel these things so intensely for anybody… but when I do, it makes me go crazy, you know…?"

"So I'm special to you, am I?"

"…You *are* special." Goku wasn't even ashamed to admit it. "The truth is… if anybody's to touch me like that, then I want it to be you, Nobody else…"

"...I see..." Vegeta didn't seem to know how else to respond, until, *"Well... you're special to me too, Kakarot... I really wish you were here right now..."*

"Heh, it's kinda funny that we're acting this way… we just saw each other yesterday, but all we can talk about is seeing each other again."

"Tch. I'm blaming you *. I never used to be like this before. You made me this way..."*

"Hey, that's not fair, Vegeta. I wasn't like this either before we got together."

"Well, it's certainly not ***my*** *doing..."*

" ...I do think… my attachment issues may have gotten worse since…" Goku trailed off.

"The divorce?"

"Yeah… between that and the stuff with my grandpa… and then… *him*... it's like… I'm afraid of losing you or something…" That of course had multiple meanings.

"I feel the same way. Even though I don't say it much... Every time you go off somewhere, I worry, that I'll never see you again. It terrifies me..."

"Hey, try to cheer up. I'll be back before you know it." It was strange that they had switched roles, but Vegeta seemed to need the reassurance right now.

"Yeah."

Without receiving much response in return, Goku, as always, continued rambling on until it was time for him to get off.

"I guess I should probably get off now. It's about time. One of the patients are starting to get impatient." There were two different phones so they had to spread between them.

"Oh. Okay. I'll talk to you tomorrow then. Goodnight."

"G"night. I love you."

"I love you too." Goku could practically *hear* him blushing when he said that.

He smiled before hanging up the phone and heading back to his room. Marsh was already asleep. He didn't seem to use the phone much for some reason. But Goku didn't ask.

9:00 PM

Goku was given an option to go back for a snack again. He stuck to apple sauce as always, alongside grape juice.

9:30 PM

He was given his medication. He was almost certain by now that the nurse was his favorite staff member. She was nice and spoke to him with understanding.

10:00 PM

The TV in the unit was turned off, and all the patients went to their rooms.

10:30 PM

Goku found himself tossing and turning that night, unable to get to sleep. The mattress was hard and his pillow was too thick. No matter how hard he tried he just couldn't relax. And every so often, a staff member would come and shine a light into the rooms to make sure all the patients were okay.

He had fallen asleep pretty easily the past couple nights between the other hospital and this one, but tonight it seemed like he just couldn't relax for some reason. He was so used to having Vegeta by his side as he slept.

It took a while for him to realize that he was feeling lonely. He wanted Vegeta by his side.

To be able to feel his skin.

His warmth.

His embrace.

He even missed his scent.

And above all else, the sense of security he felt when being held and touched by him.

It was something he had been ashamed of not even a week ago, but now he found himself craving it more than anything.

To be able to give himself over to him fully.

All of a sudden an image passed through his head, of reaching up to touch Vegeta's face and embracing him, Vegeta looking down at him with that rare gentle expression of his, as he kissed him all over and became one with him.

He wanted that right now, so badly it hurt.

Vegeta…

Tears welled up in his eyes, a rare heat flowing through his groin at the mere thought of it. Shame consumed him when he realized he was hard. And wet too apparently.

Despite it being there, he resisted the urge to touch himself, cursing himself again and again for losing control of himself like that. Just wait for it to go down.

Biting his lip for the distraction of pain, Goku buried his face in his pillow, trying to calm himself down.

What's wrong with me…? I shouldn't be thinking about these things about him. It's disgusting…

I need to sleep.

This sort of thing didn't happen often. Even when he was with Chichi.

So the few times it *did* happen, it always left him feeling bad about it. Because usually the thought of sex was the furthest thing from his mind.

Wrapping his blanket around himself to hide the wet spot on his pants, he got up and left the room, stumbling over to the nurse, who had the window closed.

She opened it. "Need something?"

"Can't sleep…."

"Alright. Just give me a second. Can you show me your armband?"

"Yeah, sure." Goku held up his wrist. The nurse scanned the barcode.

He had been given a new armband since coming here, which had his patient code written down on it. The other they had clipped off because it was useless.

Most medication required having a doctor's order for it, but there were a few pre-approved options that the nurse could give him so he let her choose what was the best one.

She gave him a small plastic cup that had the pill in it as well as a larger cup that he could fill with water at the nearby water machine.

He took the pill and downed it with some water before handing her the plastic cup, and throwing the other into the trash.

"Thanks." he said, before heading back to bed.

As he lay there, he found himself thinking about Vegeta again, but the previous thoughts were gone.

Because it was only then that he recalled it due to how brief it had been.

He was crying earlier...

Something must have upset him, but what…?

He sounded so exhausted…

I hope everything's okay…

It'd be so easy for me to go to him right now, but I know he wouldn't forgive me for that…

Vegeta…

It was moments like this Goku found himself not just craving Vegeta's warmth, but wanting to hold him in his arms and offer him the same sense of security that Vegeta himself had always provided *him* with.

If something was causing Vegeta pain, then Goku wanted to be there for him.

Please… try to hang in there…

So that way I can do the same…

Closing his eyes, he slowly began to relax, before eventually dozing off.

…

The next couple days went by as eventfully as it could have. The schedule remained overall the same, although some group activities changed depending on the day.

Goku had picked up on it pretty quickly, and certain things he looked forward to, certain things he didn't. He simply avoided the activities he didn't care for.

Goku did like the gym. So he made sure to go there.

…

Goku had noticed the bruises on Vegeta's arms and neck almost immediately as well as his limp. He didn't know what they were from but he could tell they weren't from some accident. Somebody had hurt him. Whether that was during training or not, Goku didn't know.

"Hey." Goku said, wrapping his arms around him carefully. Giving the same introductory statement as they often did.

"Hey." Vegeta replied, hesitantly returning it. There were lines under his eyes from sleep deprivation. He hadn't been able to rest much at all the past couple days. But he had swore to himself that he would come, no matter what.

Almost immediately, he melted at the embrace. Goku's touch was always so gentle to him. So caring.

He needed it, more than he even realized.

Goku blushed a bit when he felt Vegeta bury his face in his chest.

"I missed you…" Vegeta said, barely above a whisper.

"I've missed you too, but… What's gotten into you? Vegeta… cut it out, this is embarrassing." Goku giggled a little.

"I can't help it. They're so soft… Like pillows…" Vegeta said, his hair brushing against Goku's neck and face.

Goku's face flashed bright red upon hearing that, but he forced himself to regain his composure. "Come on, let's go sit down at the table over there."

Slowly Goku led Vegeta over to one of the tables in the cafeteria, grabbing Vegeta a chair. He could tell how tired he was just by looking at him. It worried Goku more than he wanted to admit.

Upon sitting down next to him, Vegeta once again clung against his chest, closing his eyes.

Goku took note of the injuries on his wrists again. It looked like he had been held down for a long period of time by somebody, somebody who was much larger than he was.

He reached out, brushing a finger over the wound.

"What happened to your wrists…? They're all bruised. Your neck too."

Vegeta seemed to tense up slightly at the contact, pulling his arms away. "It's just a mishap is all. I got careless and let my guard down."

"Training…?" Goku asked.

"...Yeah." Vegeta said, but he had never looked sadder.

"With who?" Goku wasn't an idiot. He knew those marks had to have been caused by somebody. They were aggressive looking.

And then there was the limp. What could have caused it?

"It's just an old acquaintance… It's nothing to worry about." Vegeta replied vaguely. He couldn't tell him, it would impede on his recovery. At the same time, he couldn't lie either and say that he was training alone, Goku wouldn't fall for it, so the best thing he could do was beat around what was going on. Maybe if he was less exhausted, he could have come up with a better excuse. "So how are you doing?"

Goku swallowed when he heard Vegeta change the conversation, but he wanted to trust him, so he played along again, as he had before, even after hearing Vegeta cry on the phone.

He wasn't the type of person to push people to talk about things they didn't want to, especially when it was only baseless suspicion. It was none of his business.

Vegeta said it was just training, so it was probably nothing.

But who was the acquaintance?

An old sparring partner?

Somebody he knew on earth?

Somebody from another planet?

Who?

The questions nagged at Goku, eating away at him like parasites.

Vegeta had been acting somewhat strange the past few days yet Goku couldn't put his finger on why.

But Vegeta was strong. Even stronger than *he* was right now, so, whatever it was, Goku wanted to believe that Vegeta could take care of himself.

"I'm doing okay." He finally answered. "Oh, um... I finally finished the dragon I was working on before. You can have it if you'd like..."

Goku unfolded the piece of paper he had been working on, handing it to him.

"Thanks. I'll… put it on the fridge." Vegeta murmured, taking it from him. "It looks good."

"Ah, thanks… I kinda messed up the tail, though." Goku scratched the back of his head nervously.

"Really? I hadn't noticed." Vegeta shrugged it off. Whatever error Goku was noticing was so small that it was pretty much irrelevant. "I like it."

"Grandpa would often say the same thing… I used to draw stuff for him a lot." Goku twiddled his thumbs. "Not really on paper, but sometimes I'd carve stuff into the ground for him with a stick. He always liked watching me. Sometimes he'd even ask me to draw things for him… It was fun."

"Well… You're free to draw me anything you want." Vegeta moved up against him.

Goku was just about to reply, but stopped himself when the strap of Vegeta's tanktop fell down his shoulder.

That's when another bruise caught his attention. It was a bite mark.

Vegeta's eyes widened slightly when he felt Goku's fingers exploring his shoulder and chest.

Goku wasn't surprised when he found a mark on one of his pecs as well. It was dark, maybe even more aggressive than the others had been.

"What is this?" Goku gazed at it with a painful expression. "Did he bite you…?"

It wasn't like he himself was anybody to talk, because he too had bitten his opponents before, but this one looked different somehow.

As Goku traced his thumb over the spot, Vegeta winced at the contact, pulling closer and burying his face against his chest.

He looked so vulnerable.

Vegeta wouldn't be acting this way unless something bad had happened.

"Hey… It's okay. I'm not going to hurt you. I just want to know what happened…" Goku ran a hand through his hair, kissing his crown.

"You startled me." Vegeta said vaguely. "We were just training, nothing else."

Not really the answer Goku was looking for and, quite frankly, he refused to believe that's all there was to it.

But, once again, without proof, he couldn't say or do anything.

So, in the end, he carried on the conversation as usual until time was up and Vegeta had to leave.

"I'll see you on Thursday." Vegeta said.

"Yeah… But… Vegeta…?" Goku traced his jawline, noticing painfully just how tense he seemed in response. It was like he was afraid of something.

"Hm?" Vegeta uttered.

"Take care of yourself." Goku told him the same words Vegeta had told him before. "I'm really worried about you."

"I'll be fine. I just need some rest." Vegeta assured.

As they said their goodbyes, and Goku watched him leave, he still couldn't shake the feeling that something was off.

…

Vegeta had long since reached the conclusion that not fighting back would make things go by faster. So he cooperated. Did whatever Atticus told him to. It wasn't like he had a choice in the matter.

Obedience. It was a hardwired instinct that he had learned for survival.

It was just like with Frieza. Bite his tongue and listen.

Of course, Frieza had never done to him what Atticus had done, but he was twisted in his own ways, torturing him, abusing him and humiliating him all for some sick sense of pleasure if he even got the slightest inkling to.

As a child, he had been thrown into a den of lions by his father. And it was no different now. He may have gotten stronger, but so had Atticus.

All Vegeta could do right now was endure.

…

"Marsh is gone? I was gonna give him something." Goku couldn't help his disappointment upon discovering the empty bed, all the bedding removed. Marsh had been discharged a week after Vegeta's second visitation.

It came as a shock because Marsh hadn't said a word about being discharged beforehand.

"I'm sorry." The tech said simply.

"He didn't tell *me* anything…" Goku sulked, bitterly, before walking back to his room.

Marsh was the one patient he really liked at this place and now he was gone.

That's when he saw the sticky note on his dresser.

"What's this…?" He wondered aloud.

| "If you need something, call me."

"Well, at least he left his number, I guess." Goku pouted. "Still, he could have said goodbye first…"

Unfortunately, it was just like him not to mention anything about leaving beforehand.

His next roommate was somebody much less interesting. A quiet older man who just liked sleeping all the time.

…

The only positive of Marsh leaving is that it did give him more time to get his focus back on Vegeta.

Over time, the number of wounds had started increasing drastically and becoming much bolder with each visitation. It was like it was intentional, as if the person responsible was deliberately trying to provoke him.

Because the injuries were not only abusive but possessive as well, an effort to display control and power over him.

It frustrated Goku. Vegeta wasn't some object. He was a *person,* with feelings of his own. He didn't deserve to be treated that way.

Vegeta had obviously tried his best to conceal the wounds with long sleeves but he couldn't hide the marks on his neck unless he wore a scarf, but that would be too suspicious, so he had to forgo it.

And yet, he knew that Goku still noticed it. Even if he didn't always say anything, it was obviously worrying him.

Vegeta couldn't stand lying to him, but there was no telling how Goku would react if he found out. Most likely, he would try to confront Atticus himself, but Vegeta knew Goku wasn't strong enough to stand up to him as he was.

He couldn't put his life in danger like that, knowing that Atticus could easily kill him if he wanted to.

So every time Goku asked, Vegeta had to repeat the same old story again and again. That it was from training. Goku didn't seem to believe him because the placement of the bruising was always the same, creating an obvious pattern, but, still, Vegeta kept quiet in a desperate effort to protect Goku.

…

Goku started to consider abuse on the fourth week when he himself was finally starting to recover.

The signs were obvious.

The bruising and sensitivity.

The exhaustion.

The tenseness.

The persistent limp.

How evasive he was when talking about what had been going on.

And so many other things, even how unstable his energy felt.

Vegeta was afraid of something.

An old acquaintance.

Somebody from his past.

Somebody who must have hurt him before.

That realization dawned on him like a ton of bricks one night as he laid in bed.

Somebody from the Frieza force? No, it couldn't be. They should all be dead, shouldn't they…?

It must be somebody else then, but who?

With that question unanswered, he decided then that he was going to leave.

…

Unfortunately, disappearing from the hospital with his instant transmission wasn't an option, Not one that Vegeta would ever approve of. It was dishonest and would cause far too much trouble. And he couldn't just casually check himself out or leave like in the ER without repercussions.

So, as much as he hated it, he would have to get the doctor to professionally discharge him.

He had to answer the questions with the responses they wanted, that he didn't feel like hurting himself anymore, that things were better now, that he had a plan to see a therapist once he got out, that he was eating again and so on. Just be positive. It was fairly easy, all things considered.

The only thing left was getting the doctor to call somebody who could confirm he was safe to go home.

But calling Vegeta right now was out of the question. What he might say was unpredictable.

As things stood, he was afraid that Vegeta wouldn't want him to come home yet (he had already asked a couple weeks before after which Vegeta had told him no because he still wasn't eating solids properly. He wanted him better) so Goku chose Krillin instead.

…

Krillin seemed stunned when the doctor called him.

"Goku has said that going to stay with you could be an option. Are you okay with that?"

"Uh, yeah…. I guess he can stay with us. Why? Is Vegeta not available?"

"I couldn't get up with him. I'll stay with you for a while until I hear back from him." Goku said, quickly deflecting the conversation.

"Alright. Well, as you know, I have a job, but 18 will be around, so I'm sure it'll be fine."

"I need to confirm that he'll be returning to a safe environment. No sharp objects lying around. Nothing that he could hurt himself with, etc." The doctor said.

"No, we have a child so we keep that stuff locked away."

The doctor seemed satisfied after that, making arrangements for Goku to be able to leave the same day.

…

In the end, Goku was given a referral to a therapist, and paperwork discussing his treatment plan once he was out.

It was stressful and took over two hours of waiting, but he was finally allowed to leave.

Goku then followed the woman to the front of the building, and unsurprisingly, the first thing he did was use his Instant Transmission to get to Vegeta.

What he didn't expect, however, was to find Vegeta laying shirtless in bed with more bruises than ever covering his body. Even around his waist line.

"Vegeta!" He rushed over in seconds, worry consuming him. "Hey… talk to me."

"Kakarot…?" Vegeta slurred, looking up and meeting his gaze. "What are you doing here? You're supposed to be at the hospital."

"I checked myself out. But enough about me." Goku deleted the conversation. "What happened to you? Why are you covered in all these bruises? I knew there were some but I never realized it was this bad."

"You checked yourself out…? Kakarot-" Vegeta started to scold him but was cut off by Goku.

"Answer the question, now. Please…" he pleaded. Tracing a hand over a particularly bad bruise on his chest.

"I keep telling you. It's from training." Vegeta lied. "You don't need to worry. I'll be fine."

"You sound like you've been drugged." Goku argued.

"I took some sleeping medication earlier so I could rest for a while." Vegeta said.

"Then tell me. Who's the person you've been training with?" Goku demanded to know.

"That's-"

"Ah, so you must be Kakarot…" Goku looked over to see Atticus at the door. "Vegeta's told me a lot about you."

"Atticus. Stay away from him." Vegeta said, as Atticus took a step towards Goku.

"Vegeta, who is this?" Goku asked, suspiciously, taking notice of the uniform he was wearing. It had been a possibility he had wanted to rule out but as it turns out maybe he was spot on.

"He's the acquaintance I mentioned. He's staying here until Bulma fixes his spaceship." Vegeta answered vaguely.

"He's from the Frieza force, though, and he's been staying here? Why didn't you tell me anything?" Goku wasn't angry, not by a long shot, but his concerns were suddenly amplified.

"I didn't want to bother you with it." Vegeta replied.

"Bother me with what?" Goku looked at him with confusion.

"'s nothing. Just forget about it. This doesn't concern you." Vegeta dismissed.

"The hell it doesn't. This is my home too. I'd like to know what's going on here. And he's been hurting you." Goku argued weakly.

"I told you. We were just training. That's all." Vegeta winced as he tried to move.

"Vegeta…!" Goku caressed his face. "Listen, I'm going to get you a Senzu bean, alright?"

Goku disappeared right before them, his hospital papers and patient belongings bag dropping at the bedside.

"Wait, where did he go?" Atticus asked, seeming baffled.

"He'll be back in a few minutes. But this changes things. I want you out of here. I only agreed to let you stay here because he was in the hospital. I don't want you around him."

"Oh, trust me. I'm not going anywhere. You know why?" Atticus's eyes narrowed.

"And why's that…?"

"Because I'll tell him *everything* ." Atticus said, satisfied when Vegeta's eyes widened, his hand twitching. "What we've been doing together. He'll know that you've been cheating on him. Is that what you want?"

Vegeta's entire being froze upon hearing that. "It wasn't cheating. I never consented to you!"

"Yet your body says otherwise, Vegeta." Atticus said coldly. "You always claim you hate it, but the truth is you like it when I fuck you, and the very fact that you came to another man outside of your partner is proof *enough* of your unloyalty."

"I can't control how my body responds to something like that... You're a rapist." Vegeta argued weakly, his mind foggy because of the medication.

"That's an excuse and you know it."

Vegeta was left speechless after that, questioning his words, doubting himself as he already had over the past few weeks. He wanted so badly to kill Atticus right then and there and then tell Goku everything, but Atticus was too powerful. There was nothing he could do but cooperate and Endure.

Cooperate and Endure

Cooperate and Endure

"Then... Just promise me something. If you choose stay here, then you'll leave Kakarot alone. If you lay so much as one finger on him. I swear I'll-"

"You don't need to worry. He's not really my type, so, as long as I can have *you* , then that's enough for me. I'll see you tonight, Vegeta." Atticus smiled before returning to his room.

Tears welled up in Vegeta's eyes as he left, cursing himself again and again.

Damn it. Why am I letting him ***control*** *me like this? I thought I had put this behind me, but apparently I'm the same as I always was. I can't stand this!*

...Is it possible that Kakarot would actually believe him if he said that I was cheating on him? No, probably not, but… even so, even if I wanted to tell him, I can't put him in danger like that… and knowing everything he's been through, I can't imagine how much it would worry him.

As long as Kakarot remains unharmed, that's all that matters to me. I just want him to be safe.

"Hey, I'm back. sorry it took so long. Yajirobi needed my help with something. But I got you the senzu bean. Here." Goku smiled as he put it up to his mouth.

Vegeta almost immediately rejected it.

"Vegeta…" Goku uttered painfully when he saw that his lover was refusing treatment.

"Come on… Do it for me. You need to let yourself heal." Goku rested his other hand on the other Saiyan's cheek. "Please…?"

His touch. So gentle. Filled with so much love and concern.

Vegeta's heart melted, guilt eating away at him. He couldn't worry him like this.

Slowly, he took it into his mouth and chewed it up.

"There you go." Goku's expression softened, when he swallowed it and the injuries disappeared. "Feeling better?"

"...Kakarot." Vegeta shakily reached up, touching his face. "I know you just got back but lay down next to me. I want to hold you."

"Okay…" Goku blushed a bit, crawling up on the bed with him. The senzu bean had taken care of Vegeta's injuries, but, apparently, whatever he had taken was still in his system.

Once again, Vegeta rested against Goku's chest, almost feeling like it was a pillow in itself.

"Why would you check yourself out like that without me knowing anything…?" He asked.

"I was worried about you… and I thought you'd say no like last time."

"I said no because the doctor was still worried about you. But are you really sure you're okay to be out like this?" Vegeta asked with concern.

"Yeah… I'll be fine. Try not to worry about it. I haven't purged in a while, and I've started eating solids again. They have some stuff in my paperwork about it."

"I'll take a look at it later." Vegeta murmured.

"If you could, do you think you could let Krillin know I'm okay?" Goku asked. "I kinda had the doctor call him earlier because they needed somebody to confirm I was safe to go home. I feel kinda bad because he seemed confused."

"Yeah, sure." Vegeta replied weakly, not sure how else to respond, he was kind of too out of it to truly process what Goku had said. "I'll do that."

"Oh, I forgot to mention." Goku moved closer, wanting his warmth as much as Vegeta wanted *his* . "They gave me a referral to a therapist here. They said we'd have to call them tomorrow."

"That's good. Maybe you can get some help…" Vegeta slurred.

"Also, what happened to the guy that was here earlier?" Goku asked. "I wasn't done talking to him."

"He's probably in the room I gave him. But don't bother. I don't want you going anywhere near him. He's dangerous, Kakarot..." Vegeta warned.

"Dangerous how?" Goku asked, alarmed.

"Just take my word for it, and leave him alone. Please." Vegeta refused to speak on the matter.

"He's the one who hurt you, right? And he's from the Frieza force. So why are you letting him stay here…? Vegeta, answer me. You've been acting strange these past few weeks, every time you came to see me. Has he… done something to you…? In your past?" Goku wanted to know.

"I… I'd rather not talk about it." Vegeta murmured. "I'm sorry…"

"...It's okay… I won't force you to talk about it if it's that personal, but I've been really worried about you… Ever since I heard you crying on the phone that night, I wanted nothing more than to come to you… but I knew you wouldn't forgive me if I did that. So I waited. Told myself I'd get better so I could help you too."

"You're always so caring… But that's really not necessary, Kakarot…" Vegeta assured him. "Focus on your own problems and I'll deal with mine…"

Always the same thing. He always said that. It was frustrating.

"...I really missed being held by you like this…" Goku said.

"Did you? How funny, because I missed *holding* you." Vegeta murmured.

Goku was quiet for another long moment before Vegeta looked up at him.

"Hey… what we talked about before… Is that something you still want…? Because I really don't mind… If it's you." Vegeta offered, crawling up on top of him.

"Vegeta… I don't… think now is a good time… You seem… different somehow…" Goku treaded carefully, tracing a hand over his small waistline. "You said you took something, right…? Sleeping medication. I wouldn't feel right doing that with you when you're like this."

"Oh…" Vegeta's response was delayed, closing his eyes again. "Okay."

He sounds so tired.

Goku softly ran some fingers through his hair, even as Vegeta moved his head back down to rest against his chest.

At some point, he dozed off, leaving Goku to admire his sleeping face.

The other stuff could wait.

…

"So let me get this straight. You had the doctor call Krillin and told him you were going to be staying with him…?" Was the first thing Vegeta really said when he had woken back up and actually had a chance to process everything.

"Sorry…" Goku lowered his head.

"Did you honestly believe I was going to force you to stay there if you were doing better?" Vegeta asked, exasperated.

"I didn't know… Please don't shout at me." A guilty expression passed over Goku's face as he looked down.

"I'm not… I just… wish you had talked to me first…" Vegeta sighed. "I'll let Krillin know what's going on later, okay? In the meantime, you said you were given a referral to a therapist, right? Let me see your paperwork."

"Uh, ok." Goku grabbed it, handing it to him. "They also gave me a new prescription there. As well as my old one."

Vegeta scanned through it, before grabbing his phone from the dresser. "It's the thirteenth. That's five days from now. I'm putting it into my calendar so I won't forget. It's also apparently the same business, so you should already be registered in their system." Vegeta noted.

"Well, that's good, I guess." Goku replied, not sure what else to say.

"It is. At the very least it'll save us a lot of hassle, and make it easier to get you in." Vegeta said. He then continued skimming over the information Goku had been sent home with.

"They've upped your dose of Catapres?" Vegeta inquired.

"Yeah. I started having problems relaxing at bedtime.. So the doctor increased it."

"I see." Vegeta took a mental note of it. "But you already had the melatonin. Or did they not give you that?"

"Well, they didn't have melatonin there, because it's like a vitamin or something, so…"

He didn't say much more after that, trying to give him in all the information he could on it.

"I'm gonna go and make something for us to eat." Goku said.

"Okay-Oh, wait! Let me come with you…!" Vegeta jumped up in a hurry, bringing the papers with him.

"Alright." Goku didn't know how else to respond when Vegeta suddenly clung to his arm.

What's with him all of a sudden…? He's actin' strange.

The two headed to the kitchen, Goku already debating on what to make. Some kind of soup would probably be best, the easiest to stomach.

Vegeta found his seat at the table, allowing Goku to do his own thing.

Goku glanced at him, admiring how focused he was.

He himself had trouble concentrating on basic tasks, but Vegeta always managed to catch every detail, things that Goku would have never even picked up on. In some ways, it was amazing. "Hey, Vegeta?"

"Hm?" Vegeta glanced over at him.

"You okay with Kakitamajiru?" Goku asked.

"Yeah, I'm fine with whatever you want, Kakarot." Vegeta replied simply, turning his attention back to the papers.

"Kay. I'll make some rice to go along with it, in case you want more." Goku offered.

Vegeta didn't reply, but Goku didn't mind.

For a long time the room was silent until Vegeta finally spoke back up, having finished reading the papers. "Did they talk with you about any kind of coping mechanisms while you were in there…?"

"Some. They mostly just made suggestions I wasn't interested in, though." Goku mumbled.

"Like what?" Vegeta inquired.

"Like… writing in a journal." Goku answered evasively. "I don't really like writing, though, because of all the kanji and stuff, so…"

"You don't always have to use kanji. You can use kana too."

"Yeah, but still, that's not always easy to understand… Besides, it seems pointless to write in a journal. It's not like anybody's gonna be reading it or anything." Goku shrugged.

"I would…," Vegeta blushed slightly. "if you'd allow me to…"

"I never thought my thoughts were that interesting to you…" Goku teased slightly.

"Yeah, w-well…" Vegeta stammered, struggling to fight off the embarrassment. "As your partner, it's my responsibility to know what's going on with you so I can understand your needs better. Besides, most people may not understand your writing, but I can read it just fine…"

"Last I checked, you called it chicken scratch…" Goku grumbled.

A pang of guilt hit Vegeta upon hearing that. "Well, I wasn't being *serious* …"

"You weren't…?" Goku glanced at him with a look of surprise.

"No, of course not…" Vegeta lowered his head slightly. "And if it's a journal, that doesn't need to be professional to begin with. It's something you can express your feelings in in a way that you feel the most comfortable with."

"I guess so… I hadn't thought of it that way…" Goku pondered it.

"Hold on, I think I have an empty book around here somewhere. I can give it to you." Vegeta got up and walked over to a storage shelf, pulling out a black book that he had connected a pen to. "Would this work?"

Yeah, this is perfect. Thanks." Goku smiled softly, placing it beside him.

"Don't mention it." Vegeta said.

Another silence settled between them as Vegeta observed him work with the ingredients he had picked out.

Without really thinking about it, he started to hug him from behind.

"Vegeta… I can't cook with you clinging to me like this." Goku flushed, sounding a bit harsher than intended.

"I'm sorry… I'll go back over to the table." Dejected, Vegeta pulled back, returning to his seat.

A pang of guilt hit Goku when he saw how sad Vegeta looked. Something had definitely been bothering him. It was like he had been much more reliant on physical contact than he used to be, even if he had still had periods he wasn't comfortable with it at all.

What really worried him was how vulnerable Vegeta seemed. It was almost like he *needed* to touch him to stay grounded, to feel safe, but he was afraid at the same time that the slightest wrong touch could send him over the edge.

Vegeta had his head lowered when Goku approached him with three bowls and a couple spoons. Goku smiled softly, sitting down next to him. "Here. Eat this. Get some rice too if you want."

"Thanks." Vegeta took it. Slowly, he began to eat it, as Goku brought over some tea.

"Is it good?" Goku asked.

"Yes, Kakarot. Your cooking is always good." He gave a saddened smile. "Back on Planet Vegeta, and in the Frieza force, we didn't usually have meals like this. To be honest, the stuff you've made me… It's probably some of the best I've ever had."

"That good, huh? What's your favorite food then?" Goku asked, with curious eyes.

"I told you already, didn't I? It's carrot cake." Vegeta teased, happy to see Goku's face turn red.

"I meant b-beside that." Goku stuttered, flustered. He got the feeling that Vegeta was only saying that to tease him.

"Beside carrot cake, huh? Honestly, I don't really have a favorite. I like a bit of everything." Vegeta shrugged.

"I see… I'm the same way. As you know, I was raised in the wilderness, so there are still a lot of foods I'm not familiar with. Getting to try new things, it's really a lot of fun."

"Would you believe me if I said I've never had this before?" Vegeta asked.

"Wait, you've never had Kakitamajiru?" Goku seemed shocked. "Oh man, that's one of the first things Chichi ever made for me."

"Bulma's let me try a lot of nice foods *too*... " Vegeta's retort was barely above a whisper. "You didn't even know what kind of steak to pick out at the restaurant I brought you to."

"Yeah, that's because steak is like… super *expensive* . Chichi couldn't afford that stuff." Goku argued. That's when the realization dawned on him. "Oh, hey, that reminds me. We never went back there, did we? Even though we said we were going to."

"No. We didn't, did we…?" Vegeta pondered it.

"We should plan on that. You think?" Goku offered with a grin.

"Yeah. I'd… like that." Vegeta mumbled, his ears heating up at what he could only assume to be a date proposal.

"Cool. So… how's a few weeks from now sound?" Goku brushed a hand against his arm.

"Great…" Vegeta suddenly found himself at a loss for words, the contact making him shutter slightly. "I… Kakarot…?"

His face flashed bright red again when he looked over and saw that their noses were only inches apart.

"Mn." He moaned slightly as the other Saiyan's lips met his.

Goku took the initiative on this one, just to test the waters. If Vegeta rejected him or showed any sign of discomfort then he would stop.

But Vegeta didn't. He allowed it.

After a second, Goku pulled back, lowering his head slightly as he fidgeted with Vegeta's pants, apprehensively. "...Do you… mind if we… you know…?"

"You… want to have sex?" Vegeta stared at him, his heart pounding in his ears.

"Mhm…" Goku nodded, shyly, meeting his gaze again. "You're… okay, with that…, aren't you, Vegeta…?"

Vegeta hesitated.

Am I...? After what happened, I'm not sure…

But this is what Kakarot wants…

So…

Shouldn't I want this too…?

A part of me does, but…

But what if he wants me to take the position I'm not comfortable with?

*How would I even **explain** that to him?*

"Vegeta…?" Goku pressed, a bit worried by his lack of response.

"A-ah… Yeah, of course… just… let me put the dishes in the sink, alright?" Taking Goku's hand into his own, he kissed his fingers, trying to fight back how nervous he was. "Then we can go back to our room."

"Okay." Goku watched him head to the sink, before standing up himself. Once Vegeta was done, Goku followed him upstairs, a smile on his face as he reached out and grabbed Vegeta's hand.

In response, Vegeta gnawed at the inside of his cheek, but chose to press forward, despite the fear he was feeling.

Even though he's nervous, I can tell he's excited.

He looks so happy…

I guess I can't blame him.

He's been looking forward to this for weeks now…

So if I reject him again after all this time…

I can't imagine how much it would crush him.

"Take care of him, would you? I can tell he really looks up to you."

For some reason or another, Bulma's voice echoed in Vegeta's head in that moment, a familiar warmth spreading through his groin.

"I'm trusting you."

Hopeful eyes were looking at him. He could see it even in the corner of his vision.

I don't want him to be disappointed in me…

When Goku's fingers intertwined with his, Vegeta met his gaze, swallowing the lump in his throat.

As soon as he caught Vegeta's eyes, Goku turned away again, almost immediately.

Vegeta could tell.

He's obviously nervous.

But, to be fair, so am I…

Just as anxious as his lover was, Vegeta allowed himself to be pulled by the other Saiyan to their bedroom, into the dimly lit lighting. He inwardly shuddered as he heard the door shut behind him followed by the click of a lock.

Still, I need to tell him how I'm feeling.

If don't say something soon, he's liable to-

Hands loosely brushing against his side, as Goku now stood in front of him.

"Do you… mind if I kiss you again…?" Goku's cheeks were red. He was only taking the lead because Vegeta himself hadn't already.

"Yeah, um, sure, go ahead..." Vegeta put on a brave face, despite the pit forming in his stomach.

Shyly, Goku leaned forward and captured Vegeta's lips with his own again. Gently urging him up on the bed, he cupped one of Vegeta's pecs, stimulating the spot.

Leaving a trail of kisses up and down his neck and chest, Goku tried his best to replicate what Chichi had him do or, rather, what Chichi always did to *him* , hoping it would help.

Vegeta tensed up at the contact, quickly losing his ground.

"Are you okay…?" Goku paused, concerned at sensing his hesitation.

"Yeah," Vegeta lied. "I'm… fine…" *Why do I suddenly feel so terrified?*

"You sure…?" Goku still felt uneasy.

Down deep, he'd have really preferred Vegeta to take the lead on this, but it didn't seem like he was going to, that's the only reason he had taken the initiative.

"I'll be fine, I'm… just a little nervous, is all." Vegeta swallowed. "Keep going."

I don't want to hurt his feelings.

"Well, if… you're certain about it…" Goku hesitated, but decided to trust his word.

It's probably nothing. I'm sure he'd tell me if he wasn't comfortable, right?

The truth is, Goku had no clue what he was doing anymore. He swallowed, tracing a hand along Vegeta's cheek and then back to his chest. His heart was racing in his chest as he stared into Vegeta's eyes.

What are we supposed to do in a case like this…?

We're both guys…

And Vegeta has the same parts as me, so…

I don't know what he wants…

…He usually prefers to be in control… so

I guess I could try… taking the role of the woman, but from the top instead…? Chichi did that a couple times with me too… so it should probably be fine, right…?

Pressing his hands against Vegeta's thighs, Goku gazed down at the bulge between Vegeta's legs with a small blush. He had never felt more vulnerable.

Maybe I could try pleasuring him a bit first? It should help relax him some. "You… mind if I take off your pants?"

"No… it's um… alright." Vegeta looked down at Goku's hands, the pit in his stomach becoming larger by the second.

Right as Goku started to do as verbally permitted, however, Vegeta immediately found himself panicking, his chest constricting.

Crap… He's expecting me to be the bottom, after all….

*I can't, not like **this** . Not with **him** .*

I just need to ask him to switch. I'm sure he'd be okay with it.

He'd understand.

No, how the hell can I possibly expect that of him knowing everything he's been through?

*I'm so **selfish…***

"What's wrong, little Prince? Can't take a little dick? I thought anal was your kind's favorite. That's okay, I don't mind toughening you up a bit. Then you'll be begging me for more."

"Wait..." His voice shook, pressing his palms against chest, gasping for air right as Goku had pulled his pants halfway off.

"W-What's wrong?" Goku wavered, his heart skipping a beat.

"I…" Vegeta cursed his voice, his eyes darting around. He was so used to being ignored by now. Why would this be any different? Tears fell down his cheeks.

*Come on. **Speak** , damn it!*

"Vegeta…?" Goku paused, only now recognizing the fear in his face. Had he made a mistake? Misunderstood? "Hey…"

"It's… Please… don't… I'm afraid…" It took everything Vegeta had to say those words. And even then, he wondered if he was still going to be ignored.

Atticus and everybody else always had.

"Vegeta…" Goku's breath hitched when he saw the tears, immediately retracting his hand. "I'm so sorry, I didn't know… I thought you wanted this… Oh God, what have I done…? I won't touch you. I swear… Please don't cry…"

"Kakarot, It's okay… I know you weren't trying to hurt me…" Vegeta reassured him, wiping away the moisture that had formed in the corner of his partner's eye. "There's just… some things… I can't do right now… and this is one of them… It's the memories… It terrifies me."

Well, that was putting it lightly, it wasn't just the memories, but a matter of simple preference too, and yet the trauma had amplified that tenfold.

He felt weak even admitting that.

The answer was vaguer than intended, so it left Goku misunderstanding, thinking he meant he was afraid of sex in general, but the guilt consuming him was much more pressing.

"I'm such an idiot… I should have realized that you were uncomfortable…" Goku had never felt worse in his life. He himself had started crying as well. "I'm so sorry…"

Again and again, he apologized, hugging against him.

"Shh… Hey, it's okay… Kakarot…" Vegeta tried to soothe him, pulling him in for an embrace, his heart breaking as Goku sobbed in his arms.

Goku was so sweet. He would never intentionally hurt somebody. Vegeta knew this.

He wasn't like their assaulters.

"If I had hurt you, I wouldn't have been able to forgive myself." Goku choked out.

"No. You wouldn't have done that… I know you wouldn't have… You're different from them. You're a good person, Kakarot…" Vegeta ran a few fingers through his hair, in an attempt to calm him down. "Let's… just rest for a while, and we'll figure this out later, okay…? Or would you like to take a shower first?"

"I wanna take a bath with you…"

"If that's what you want, then we'll do that. I'll even wash your hair like before. How's that sound?"

"Ok." Goku murmured.

Vegeta kissed his crown. "Then go pick yourself out some clothes."

Goku got up, heading over to his dresser, getting some pajamas.

In the meantime, Vegeta took a moment to send Krillin a text message, just then remembering he had needed to.

"Kakarot is safe with me. I apologize if he bothered you earlier. He was worried about something and wasn't sure if I'd allow him to come back home..."

"I figured it was something like that. Well, as long as he's okay, that's all that matters."

"Yeah."

"Alright, I'm ready." Goku had already finished.

"Oh, let me get mine." Vegeta got up, grabbing some clothes from his own dresser, consisting of a pair of shorts and a tank top.

…

It wasn't long before the two found themselves in a bathtub together, water and suds surrounding them.

"Oh man… This is way better than those crappy hospital showers… A real life bath." Goku had never felt better. In comparison to the ones at the hospital, the bathrooms actually trapped heat.

Vegeta watched with some irritation yet a begrudging fondness as Goku started playing with the suds floating around in the water as well as the soap on himself..

"Hey, Vegeta… Look how big this bubble is." Goku giggled, holding up a large bubble in his palms.

"Idiot, stop playing around. You're making a mess." Vegeta scolded him. *He's like a child*...

He had said that so many times, and yet that innocence and fascination over the smallest of things is one of the many things that made Goku so alluring to Vegeta.

Reaching out, Vegeta rested a hand against Goku's cheek, moving over towards him.

"....geta…" Caught off guard, Goku stopped what he was doing to meet his gaze.

"Mn." He moaned a bit as Vegeta's tongue entered his mouth.

He liked this. Letting Vegeta take control. Dare say, in some ways, he *preferred* it this way.

Their tongues collided, but it wasn't aggressive. It was actually quite gentle. Vegeta just wanted a chance to explore his lover's mouth for the first time in what felt like forever. He pulled back, his cheeks tinged with a pink hue. "Did you just call me 'geta'…?"

"N-no." Goku stammered, embarrassed. It hadn't been intentional. The first part simply hadn't come out loud enough.

"Oh, but I believe you *did* . Call me that again."

"I…" Goku's voice caught in his throat as he looked down. "W-Why?"

"Because I liked hearing it." Vegeta caught his eyes again. "It was cute."

"Cute…?" Goku blushed. Y-ya really think so? Then it wasn't… strange, after all…?"

"Of course not…" Vegeta looked away. "just… don't call me that around the others, okay…? Bulma would have a field day if she heard you using a nickname like that with me."

"...Geta." Goku tested the name on his tongue, too distracted by the fact that Vegeta had even permitted it to focus on any of the other stuff. "I dunno, it still feels weird t'me..."

"Well, you *are* weird. In a good way…" Vegeta kissed him again.

And again.

He *kept* kissing him, even nibbling at his lips, until they were red.

Goku let out several breathy moans as he tried to keep up with it, his ears red.

Vegeta's always so passionate when he kisses me. I almost feel like my face is gonna be eaten or something… but it feels nice…

"I really missed this…" Goku pulled back slightly, just enough to talk. "Being able to kiss ya like this… We couldn't do this when I was in the hospital."

"What are you talking about? We kissed each other multiple times." Vegeta said.

"I know, but it's different when we're alone…" Goku replied in a weak voice.

"Different how…?" Vegeta asked.

"...excites me." Goku blushed, a bit frustrated. "And makes me feel things."

"Like it turns you on…?" Vegeta inquired without judgment.

"...Mhm…" Goku looked down, almost like he was ashamed. "I kinda feel bad about it, though."

"That's nothing to feel bad about, Kakarot. I feel the same way when I'm kissing *you* ***too*** sometimes…" Vegeta took his hand into his own, brushing his lips against his fingers.

"You do?" Goku asked, the guilt in his expression vanishing somewhat.

"Yes, it's normal." Although he got turned on by a lot more than just kissing. But he didn't need to say that. "Listen. I still have things I need to figure out right now, but, if you're willing to wait for me, then… maybe… we could do those things some time soon…"

"Kay…" Goku looked away, twiddling his fingers. "Actually, to be honest with you, I kinda felt awkward earlier because I was expecting you to be the one to…"

He didn't finish the sentence, leaving Vegeta confused.

"Expecting me to what…?" Vegeta probed.

"Mn… No, it's nothing… Don't worry about it." Goku nervously scratched the back of his head in embarrassment for even thinking about such a thing.

Vegeta didn't press it, but couldn't help but wonder.

…

"Here, I've got your medication." Vegeta held out a cup of water, alongside Goku's pill and melatonin for him to take once Goku came back to bed.

"Oh. Thanks." Goku smiled as he took them. Once he was done, he handed the cup back to Vegeta, who placed it on the dresser.

He then laid down, waiting for Vegeta to join him, which Vegeta did after a moment.

Vegeta ran a hand up Goku's side, pulling him into an embrace. "You know I'm glad you're back… So I can hold you like this."

"You said that earlier." Goku brushed a hand through his hair.

"I did? Heh. Must be getting old." Vegeta joked.

"Well, you are older than *I* am and I'm a *grandpa* now. Man, time really flies ya by, doesn't it? This past year has went by so fast I almost can't keep track of it all." Goku laughed.

"Feels like just yesterday that I was trying to kill you. Yet here we are, in a relationship… It's almost crazy…" Vegeta added.

The two laughed and talked for a while before Goku started to doze off, relaxing in Vegeta's arms.

Vegeta watched him with fondness, his expression soft as he caressed Goku's cheek.

Kakarot…

My sweet mate…

I promise I'll keep you safe from him.

Even if it means losing myself in the process.

You'll never have to endure anything like that again.

Not while I'm alive.

Vegeta's heart dropped when he saw Atticus out of the corner of his eye. No surprise, he was drunk again.

"Vegeta…" he slurred. "Get over here. I need you…"

Vegeta kissed Goku's forehead, biting back tears, before getting off the bed and leaving the room.

Almost immediately, Atticus grabbed his wrist.

"Come with me. We're going to your gravity chamber."

"What? Why?" Vegeta protested, fear and confusion consuming him.

"Because. I don't want any chance of him waking up because of your incessant crying. You're too noisy." Atticus spat.

That comment stung more than Vegeta had wanted to admit, especially considering all their ordeals had been non-consensual, but now Atticus wanted to silence him too. He felt like an animal.

But down deep, he couldn't bring himself to protest. He could never do *anything* to impede on Goku's rest or recovery.

He could accept Goku hating him, but he couldn't risk his life.

RAPE SCENE AHEAD

Entering the gravity chamber, Atticus pushed Vegeta inside, closing the door behind him.

"Strip."

Slowly, Vegeta did as told, gasping for air when Atticus slammed him into the wall by his neck.

When he was drunk like this, his behavior was always so volatile. Some nights he was more mild mannered, and then other times like this he was aggressive. This was one of those nights.

"That's right. Now tell me who you belong to. I want to hear you say it."

"I belong to you." Vegeta choked out amidst tears. Obedience was the only option he had. He wasn't strong enough to fight back, no matter how much he wanted to.

"And your body?" Atticus harshly squeezed his nipple, causing Vegeta to groan in pain.

"My body… is yours. You may do with me as you wish." Vegeta was barely able to breathe.

"Good boy." Atticus grinded against him. "Now… I want you to start singing for me… Like you used to."

"No, please. Anything, but that." Vegeta pled.

"Anything, huh? I wonder how your Kakarot sounds when *he* sings, then."

"W-wait, I'll do it. Just don't hurt him..." Vegeta stammered, anxiously preparing himself. After a long moment, he began to sing, his shoulders shaking.

"That's it… Just like that." Atticus entered him with a euphoric expression.

"Ah…!" Vegeta clasped a hand over his mouth to stifle a sob from the overwhelming sensation of his walls being torn to shreds, fingernails digging into the wall in an attempt to ground himself.

"Keep singing…! Don't stop." Atticus snapped, pulling at his hair, yanking his head back. His other hand was clutching at Vegeta's waist so tightly that Vegeta already knew it was going to leave another bruise, just like the wound on his neck.

The bulge in his stomach caught his sight, causing a mix of shame and nausea to consume him as Atticus's fingers poked at the spot.

Bile rose to his throat, but in the end, Vegeta could do nothing.

Cooperate and endure

Cooperate and endure

Cooperate and endure

That was the only way to survive this.

…

****RAPE SCENE END****

...

An hour later, Vegeta found himself on the floor covered in cum, his entire body aching more than ever before.

His hair was a mess from being pulled at and his throat and jaw were sore, for reasons which he didn't even want to think back on.

Part of the experience had been a blur, his memories tended to jumble together every time this happened anymore.

And yet the fire in him had never been stronger.

Damn him.

*I swear I'm going to **kill** that bastard.*

I just have to bide my time, until I'm strong enough to take him down.

Digging his nails into the surface of the floor, he formed a fist as frustrated tears welled up in his eyes yet again that night.

Just you wait, Atticus.

I'm not your plaything and nor am I some weakling to be pushed around.

And one day. You're going to rue the day you chose to make a mockery of a Saiyan's honor this way. Then you'll know the true meaning of humiliation.

I'll see to that one for sure.

Wiping the sticky substance off his face and pulling on his clothes, the first thing Vegeta did was head to the kitchen, grabbing a can of booze. The same kind Atticus had been drinking.

Even if only for a little while, he needed to clear his head.

Stop crying, damn it. I can't let him control me like this.

Brushing away the tears, he took several gulps, sitting down by the fridge. Curling in on himself, he drank sip after sip, waiting for the buzz to kick in.

Memory upon memory continued flooding back to him.

"Take it all in."

He clawed at his neck and jaw.

I can still feel it in my throat.

"That's it Vegeta, like that. Such a lovely expression."

Damn it all…! I need him… ***out…*** *!*

Throwing the now *empty can against the trash can, he grabbed another from the fridge, and downed it in a matter of minutes.*

And then another.

And another.

He kept drinking until he couldn't even think straight. So many cans he had lost track. Of course, he himself didn't realize it, but his emotions were running even more haywire than before.

He tried to get up, stumbling towards his room with one of the cans still in hand.

Much to his frustration, he lost his balance along the way, tripping right in front of the door. The can slipped out of his hand, spilling across the floor.

The sound jolted Goku from his sleep.

"What… was that..?" He sat up, his eyes widening when he saw the familiar figure, rushing over despite his own issues with balance. "Vegeta!? Hey, are you okay?!"

Kneeling down by his side, he brushed a hand against Goku's shoulder. But couldn't ignore how hurt he felt when Vegeta slapped his hand away.

"Don't touch me!" Vegeta growled, refusing to budge.

"Ow! What's with you? This isn't like you." Goku pulled back, before looking over and noticing the can, he picked it up and realized a moment later what it was, the smell entering his senses. "Hold on, have you been drinking?"

"So what if I have…? What would *you* know?" Vegeta slurred.

"I…" Goku was genuinely at a loss of words at hearing that. Still, he refused to be detoured. "Look, I can't let you stay here on the floor like this. I'm bringing you back to bed now, okay?"

"No…" Vegeta attempted to fight him off when Goku lifted him in his arms.

"Ouch. Cut it out, I'm just trying to help you." Goku swallowed back. "I'm not going to hurt you."

At hearing that, Vegeta seemed to calm down some. Or maybe he was too out of it because of the alcohol to fight back any further, Goku didn't know.

Placing him down on the bed, Goku gave a small smile, caressing his cheek. "There you go… Just try to get some rest now. Do you need anything…?"

"Water..."

"Yeah. Sure." Goku started to walk off but Vegeta caught his hand.

"No, wait, don't go. Stay here…" Vegeta said in a drunken panic, almost as if he had forgotten their conversation up to now.

"I can't get the water for you if I stay here, silly." Goku teased a bit, although he himself was somewhat out of it as well.

"You can do it later." Vegeta murmured.

"Vegeta…" Goku couldn't help but feel slightly amused that Vegeta wanted him to stay there so badly.

"Please… Kakarot." Vegeta refused to let his hand go.

"I still need to clean up the alcohol. I can't just leave it there." Goku pointed out, gently breaking Vegeta's grip on him.

"Yeah, but…" Vegeta trailed off.

"Hey, try not to worry so much, I'll be back in a moment." Goku grinned.

Vegeta wanted to protest, but when the other Saiyan kissed him on the forehead, he calmed down some, letting him go.

Much to his relief, Goku came back only minutes later as promised, wiping up the alcohol with a towel before laying back down in the bed next to him, a cup of water in hand. "Here. I want you to sit up. And drink slowly. We wouldn't want you to start choking now."

Vegeta slowly did as instructed, drinking it down.

Afterwards, he laid back down, handing the cup back over to Goku, who simply put it on the dresser.

Goku then joined him in bed, watching as the other Saiyan curled up against him. "I've never seen you drink like this before. Did something happen…?"

Goku had seen him drunk at the festival, months before, but it was nothing like this.

"No. It's nothing…" Vegeta couldn't say. He winced slightly when Goku's fingers brushed against his cheek which was slightly swollen.

"Idiot! If you throw up on me again, I'll kill you. Now try again, and do it properly this time."

Goku's heart clenched at the sight. He swallowed. *"He's hurt you again, hasn't he? Answer me, Vegeta."*

Vegeta looked up at him, Goku's voice flooding in his head which collided with Atticus's.

"Let's keep this our little secret, between just the two of us. And if you* do *happen to tell him or anybody else about what we've been doing here, I'll make certain to do the exact same thing to him right in front of you, before I kill him. And I'm sure you don't want* that*, do you now, my dear Vegeta…?"

"We were just training. That's all. Stay out of it."

Once again, Vegeta gave the same answer as always.

Hearing his concerns shot down so quickly by Vegeta was frustrating, but in the end, Goku had no choice but to drop it. "Well… Do you want another senzu bean? I still have some from earlier."

"No. Keep it." Turning over, Vegeta curled up against his pillow, his shoulders shaking as a sob escaped his lips. *Maybe I deserve this.*

Goku watched him in pure agony, wanting so badly to help him feel better. But how…?

Vegeta was supposed to be the strong one, and Goku had gotten so used to him being exactly that, so he didn't really know how to handle himself in a situation like this.

His thoughts were running in a million different directions due to how anxious he was, afraid of making the wrong move, but still, he tried to stay calm.

To come up with a solution.

What would grandpa have done if he saw that **I** *was crying…?*

He might hug me, but I don't think Vegeta ***wants*** *to be hugged right now. So what else* ***is*** *there?*

Come on. ***Think*** .

Wait… There might be something I could try.

I don't know how he'll react to it, though…

Goku hesitantly reached out, grazing his fingernails over the other man's back in a gentle stroke.

Much to his surprise, Vegeta grew less and less tense as Goku continued.

Rubbing his back seemed to do the trick.

Slowly, Vegeta relaxed, his expression softening.

Kakarot's fingers… and the touch of his skin…

He's the only man who's ever been this kind to me…

Yet I betrayed him…

I allowed my body to respond to somebody who isn't even my own ***partner*** *.*

It's ***disgusting*** *…*

As Goku's nails moved upwards, flicking and swerving though his hair, Vegeta closed his eyes his entire thought process changing in a matter of seconds.

Still… He's always so gentle with me…

I should hate it, being pampered this way, but it feels nice.

Reminds me of Bulma in some ways…

He was already exhausted due to the alcohol so it wasn't long before he dozed off.

Goku watched with relief, carefully pulling him closer under the covers so their bodies were intermingling. The feeling of Vegeta's warmth meshing with his, it was a bliss like no other, one he had so desperately missed while in the hospital.

Kissing the nape of Vegeta's neck, he wrapped his arm around the other man's waist before planting several more kisses on the back of his head. He then gently rested his hand against the other man's chest, finding himself enamored by how small Vegeta's pecs were. Although his heart was beating faster than ever, he couldn't help it. He needed this right now.

He didn't do much, of course - he would *never* cross over those lines - but he wanted to feel him all the same.

Closing his eyes, he too soon dozed back off.

…

The course of the following five days were hectic, and neither Goku nor Vegeta himself had brought back up his incident with getting drunk. Goku himself almost started to, but, outside of having a hangover, it was pretty clear Vegeta preferred to pretend it never happened.

During the day, Atticus usually didn't come out of his room much except to go to the fridge for more alcohol, so Goku and Vegeta were typically left to their own devices.

Night time, on the other hand, that was another matter entirely.

Atticus had been noticeably becoming bolder and more aggressive than ever towards Vegeta, doing and saying anything he could to remind Vegeta how small and helpless he was.

But what tore Vegeta apart more than anything was the fact that Atticus chose to rape him while Goku was asleep.

He hated having to lie about it.

It was vile and dishonest.

He had already vowed that once this was over, he'd tell Goku *everything* .

And if Goku chose to leave him for him, then so be it.

…

At long last, the day of Goku's appointment arrived.

The place was busier than the doctor's office that Goku and Vegeta were used to but it was also more spacious and the staff were nice.

So was the therapist. He was a middle aged man who wore glasses, had a long beard and a slouch. He went by the nickname Kurr.

Of course it was more of an introductory meeting, but Goku quickly resonated with him.

He was funny, outgoing, and what really pulled him in was that Kurr knew basically everything there was to know about martial arts.

He was completely different from what Goku had initially expected.

They talked about Goku's plans for the future, what he'd like to do, as well as touching on his his current stressors.

Unsurprisingly, Kurr made the suggestion for writing in a journal just as the people at the hospital and Vegeta had encouraged him to.

He had been a bit unsure about it, but upon receiving yet another suggestion for it, he finally found himself considering it.

"I suppose it wouldn't be a bad idea to use a journal," Goku admitted, gaining a look from Vegeta, who was sitting next to him. "but I'm not really sure what I'd write in it…"

"Anything that comes to mind." Kurr said. "It doesn't have to be anything fancy, it can just be a single sentence, saying how you're feeling, whether good or bad. And then we could talk about it the next time you come back here, if you'd like."

Goku was sold. This man seemed to know what he was talking about.

"Alright. I guess I could *try* it, just to see if it helps any…"

…

"The store?" Goku inquired, once they were out of the doctor's office.

"Yeah, we're running out of milk and there's several other things I need to get." Vegeta said.

"Uh, okay." Goku mulled it over. "Actually, come to think of it, we need more eggs. We're almost out of them."

"I'm aware." Vegeta said. "I have that on the list. And when we get there, I want you to pick out some food items that you'd like to eat."

"Alright." Goku replied.

"I mean it." Vegeta brushed a hand over Goku's stomach, causing him to giggle. "That stomach is to stay full while I'm around."

"I know…." Goku lowered his head with a small blush, a slight look of guilt in his eyes at knowing Vegeta was worried about him.

Vegeta watched him with a certain fondness. He was glad that Goku had started eating again, but he could only hope that it would stay that way.

…

Together, the two Saiyans walked around the store, picking up items they needed and wanted. Vegeta, of course, had the ultimate say-so in what they bought, but, for the most part, he let Goku choose except when it came to him trying to grab too many of one item.

"We only have so much room in our freezer, Kakarot, we are *not stuffing it with ice cream*."

"It's only four containers." Goku pouted.

"On top of the 6 boxes of popsicles and 4 boxes of ice cream sandwiches you grabbed? I said no." Vegeta had made up his mind. "We can come back here when you finish the other stuff."

"Jerk." Goku muttered, putting them back up.

"I'm not being a jerk. I'm just thinking rationally…" Vegeta let out a sigh. Despite his reasoning, he couldn't help but feel a pang of guilt as Goku continued glaring at him even as he was following him out of the isle.

He's not going to let this go, is he…?

"Ugh. *Fine* ." He caved. "You can have *one* , okay? But no more."

"Really? Man, you're the best, Vegeta!" Goku grinned, as he grabbed the container of strawberry ice cream from the freezer, putting it into the basket.

He had just won through guilt tripping and Vegeta saw that.

"Ugh. Whatever, but you had better finish these, you hear?" He pointed a finger at him. "If even *one box* goes past its expiration date, you're *through* ."

"Don't worry. I'll finish it." Goku assured him.

Vegeta sighed. He could only assume that Goku had picked up so much ice cream because it was easy for him to eat and could technically even qualify as liquid.

But he wanted him to focus more on solids.

And it wasn't just that. There was still the concern Vegeta had after the whole milk incident. He didn't want to bring it up, but he could only hope this wasn't related.

"Oh, that reminds me." He turned into another frozen isle. "I'd like you to pick out some microwave dinners. Kakarot?" Vegeta looked over to see that Goku was trying to walk past the aisle. Grabbing his wrist, he ignored the protest, pulling him with him. "Get over here."

"No, I don't want any of those." Goku struggled to pull back, but Vegeta's grip was too strong.

"Kakarot… listen to me." Vegeta pled. "You need variety in your diet… Like meat and vegetables. You can't just keep eating the stuff you have been."

Gently, Vegeta pulled Goku with him, towards one of the doors. "Look here. It's turkey, corn and mashed potatoes. You like turkey, don't you? So why don't we get this one?"

Goku paused for a moment, uncertain. And nervous. "Okay…"

"Ohh, it's broccoli and cheese. That looks good, doesn't it?" Vegeta was putting his pride aside to speak with enthusiasm in hopes that it would encourage Goku to agree to it.

"Yeah, I guess so."

Vegeta's heart sank at the lack of interest, but he grabbed some of the dinners anyway.

"Hey, let's go and take a look at the pasta they have here, maybe we could get some rigatoni or lasagna." Vegeta took his hand again, intertwining their fingers as he led him out of the aisle.

Goku followed behind wordlessly. The very thought of this stuff was making him sick. It was true he had started eating regular foods again but it was still hard at times.

So in the end, he had no choice but to tune the conversation out. Vegeta could do what he wanted.

Vegeta realized that Goku was ignoring him almost immediately, but deep down, he knew he couldn't force him to do anything.

He sighed, seeing that it was apparently going to be left up to him to make the decision on food. Just maybe, Goku would cooperate in eating whatever he picked out.

…

Once he had finished picking up all the items on his list, he thought for a moment.

"Kakarot, you want some fruit? Surely you'd like *that* ."

"Well, fruit does sound pretty good. I kinda want some kiwis and oranges…" Goku mumbled, sheepishly.

Vegeta smiled softly, brushing a hand against Goku's arm. "If that's what you want, then we'll get that…"

…

Once Vegeta and Goku had finished their shopping, they headed over to the check-out line and Vegeta started lifting items onto the conveyor belt.

Goku was about to help but that's when Vegeta's phone rang.

Vegeta took it out of his pocket, handing it over to Goku. "It's Bulma. Can you answer this?"

"Yeah, sure." Goku took it from him, clicking it. "Hello? Hey, Bulma."

He walked off a few feet, wanting to give Vegeta more room.

Vegeta listened to him as he continued moving the groceries.

"Yeah, I'm doing okay. Did you need something? A party…? Sure, I guess we could go. When is it…? Oh, okay. Hold on. Did you say the 23rd or 24th of May? I couldn't hear… The 23rd? 1 PM…? Alright…. Mhm, I don't mind. Thanks."

A moment later, Goku clicked off the phone returning to Vegeta's side.

"No news on the spaceship yet, I take it…?" Vegeta asked, almost immediately.

"Well, she didn't mention anything about that, but apparently, there's this party on the 23rd of May that she wants us to go to. She said it had something to do with capsule corp…"

"I see." Vegeta mused. *What could be taking her so long…? They should have had it repaired by now. I-*

No, I need to be patient.

And what difference is it going to make anyways if Atticus decides he wants to stay here, after all…?

Knowing that bastard, he probably ***will*** *...*

The thought terrified Vegeta more than he could speak out loud. He felt so helpless.

Why is this happening?

"Vegeta? Hey, the cashier is waiting for you."

"Oh, right, sorry." Vegeta jumped, startled, pulling out his card.

Goku's eyebrows furrowed. *What's with him? He seems on edge all of a sudden… It's like he's afraid of something… Is it Atticus…? He keeps saying that nothing is going on between them, but the way he acts about him… It's not normal.*

"What's wrong? What are you looking at me like that for?" Vegeta asked.

"Mn. It's nothing…" Goku averted his gaze.

*If something really **has** been going on, and Vegeta's just too afraid to tell me about it, then what can I do? As I am now, I'm not strong enough to beat Atticus. I know that much from his power level. So if I tried to get involved now, I'd just end up putting both of our lives at risk… Still, I can't just stand by if he's being abused like this… What should I do…?*

"Come on. I'm putting this stuff into the car." Vegeta said after paying, walking past Goku with the shopping cart.

Goku followed behind, waiting for him to get his capsule out. Once the car popped out, Goku helped him load the bags into the back seat, afterwards hopping into the passenger's seat.

Vegeta brought the shopping cart back into the store, before returning to the car. When he started it up, he paused for a moment. "I kind of want a coffee. Do you have somewhere in mind that you'd like to eat?"

"Uh-uh. Not really." Goku shook his head. "I'm not all that familiar with this area, either, so I wouldn't know what all they have here."

"Hm." Vegeta thought it over, taking out his phone and searching up something. "There's a coffee shop nearby here."

"You know I can't stand coffee." Goku muttered.

"I'm not getting you any." Vegeta retorted. "We'll go somewhere else once I'm done there."

"You don't need to do that. I'm not really hungry right now. I can make something later." Goku said.

"Well, if you're certain about it." Vegeta gave in. "But I'm holding you to that. No shirking out on me."

"I won't…" Goku replied, sheepishly.

Not much was said after that. Vegeta drove in silence, making his way to his destination.

The two arrived at the coffee shop a few minutes later.

"I'm going inside, you can stay out here if you want to. I should be back in a couple minutes." Vegeta said, getting out. "I'll leave the car running for you so you can use the AC."

"Alright." Goku replied, adjusting his seat so he was leaning back a bit.

Vegeta closed the door behind him and headed inside. As he waited, Goku reached over, turning on the Radio.

He absentmindedly flipped through the stations one by one just to see what was on when a familiar voice caught his attention. It was Satan, bragging about saving the world again.

No surprise there.

At the same time, it wasn't like Goku minded, considering everything Satan and Videl had done for Gohan. They had given him a chance to fulfill his dream of becoming a scholar and he actually had a future with them, one that Goku and Chichi themselves may have never been able to provide.

In that sense, Goku couldn't be more grateful to them. He knew Chichi had been so as well.

To be honest, it kind of made him feel bad because he *hadn't* been able to do those things for Gohan or Goten. Minus for the little bit of field work he had done, he always left things in Chichi's hands to take care of.

And now the same thing was happening between him and Vegeta. Vegeta and Bulma kept shelling out for him and he had no way to pay them back.

Vegeta kept saying he didn't owe him anything, but that didn't really offer him much reassurance.

"Kakarot?" Vegeta's warm breath suddenly hit his ear.

"Huh?!" Goku shuttered, looking over to see that Vegeta had returned with a cup of coffee in hand.

"What's the matter? You were spaced out." He asked.

"I-It's nothing…" Goku stuttered, not wanting to worry him, changing the station. "Just thinking about some stuff is all."

"Like what…?" Vegeta observed him with a risen eyebrow..

"That…. maybe I should get a job." Goku turned away.

"A *job* …? What kind of job?" Vegeta rose an eyebrow. This was coming out of nowhere.

"Not sure yet. Haven't really thought about it. Meat shop…?" Goku piped out randomly, with a nervous smile. He clearly hadn't thought about it.

"What? Don't be ridiculous…" Vegeta scoffed.

"I'm serious, Vegeta." Goku said.

"...Kakarot… Look, I won't stop you, but what's this all about…?" Vegeta asked, baffled.

"...I just… feel bad for not doing more for you… You just bought me a bunch of food, and even provided me with a home yet I can't even pay you back for it…" Goku rubbed his arm nervously.

"You don't *need* to. I told you before. I'm not doing this because I want something in return. Everything I've done is because I care about you, you moron. So if you do happen to get a job, then I want that to be on your own terms, not because you feel like you owe me something…" Vegeta reached up cupping his chin to stop him from looking away. When their eyes met, his expression softened. "Do you get what I'm saying?"

"Yeah… I guess so…" Goku said.

"And besides, all the money I get is from Bulma. So if you really want to thank anybody, then it should be her, not me…" Vegeta mumbled.

"Still…. I want to be able to support you like *she* has. I… I really messed up with Chichi, I'm starting to realize that now. But I don't want to mess up with *you* too…" Goku lowered his head. "Bulma's always building stuff for you. I can't do those things, but I'd at least like to provide some money to pay you back somehow, for everything you've done for me."

Vegeta had to take a moment to pause. "Kakarot… I wasn't attracted to Bulma because she was rich or even smart. Sure, her intelligence may have been a part of it, But that's not why I fell in love with her…"

"Why… was it…?" Goku asked, hesitantly.

"…It's because she was kind to me, Kakarot. After you died, I was… having a really hard time dealing with my emotions. I wasn't handling things well, and she… she was the one who helped me through that." Vegeta turned away. "No matter how much trouble I may have caused her, she never gave up on me. It was because of her that I started training again, even though I had told myself that I never would."

"I… didn't know…" Goku looked away.

"Do you see now? The reason I fell in love with you… It's the same as it was with her… And I don't know if I've ever said this before, but… outside of you and Bulma… The only experiences I've ever had with intimacy before… They were painful, Kakarot… Pedophiles, and rapists. People who wanted to take advantage of me and use me for my body… But you're different… You're gentle with me… And being able to kiss you… It makes me so happy."

Goku stared at him for a moment, his heart fluttering at the confession.

"I… really like kissing you too." He blurted the words out without thinking. Maybe that wasn't the correct response to such a heart felt confession, but Vegeta wasn't all that offended.

Their eyes met again, an awkward silence settling between them.

Leaning in, Vegeta briefly brushed his lips against Goku's before pulling away.

Running a few fingers through his hair, he smiled. "Let's go home… Yeah?"

Goku gave a small nod. "Okay."

As Vegeta began driving again, Goku quietly watched his surroundings pass him by. He didn't say much more after that, seeming content listening to the radio.

…

"Kakarot. Wake up. We're home."

Goku opened his eyes to realize he had fallen asleep. He murmured something incomprehensible.

"I want you to help me unload the groceries." Vegeta instructed. "We've got to bring them to the kitchen."

"Alright…" Goku got out, before grabbing some bags from the back of the car and walking over to the front of the house.

Vegeta followed behind, unlocking the door.

Immediately after, Goku headed to the kitchen, placing the groceries on the table, after which the two Saiyans made quick work of bringing the stuff in in a matter of minutes.

"I've gonna go to the bathroom. I'll be back in a few minutes." Goku said, running off.

As Vegeta sorted through the groceries, he saw Atticus into the kitchen out of the corner of his eye.

"Did you get more alcohol?" He asked, pressing a hand against Vegeta's backside.

"Yes, I got the alcohol, as per your request…" Vegeta said, biting the inside of his cheek, as he bitterly tried his best to ignore the wandering hand. "There's a pack in this bag. I…"

He tensed up when Atticus took it and breathed into his neck.

"Meet me out in the gravity chamber later. The usual time. I'll be waiting." The larger man purred, right as Goku walked back in.

Goku heard what he said and he was at a loss for words, especially when he saw Atticus's hand groping Vegeta's butt.

Down deep, he wanted to say something, and maybe he would have if Atticus didn't remove it right after.

Despite not speaking, however, he sent Atticus a glare, as some sort of warning.

Nobody was allowed to touch Vegeta like that.

Atticus smirked, walking past him with the bag.

Goku was by Vegeta's side in a matter of moments.

"...Hey, what was that? Why was he touching you like that?" Goku asked, but Vegeta refused to look at him. "Vegeta-"

He started to reach a hand out towards his shoulder only to be slapped away.

"It's *nothing* . Just stay out of it." Vegeta growled.

"But he was-" Goku's chest burned.

"I said to *drop it* …" Vegeta cut him off again. "Just focus on unbagging the groceries."

"...Fine…" Goku muttered after a long moment of hesitation, a raw stinging sensation in his chest. Maybe he was just mistaken and it wasn't what he thought it was. But if that was true, then why was Vegeta acting so defensive about it?

He gnawed at his lip to keep himself from pressing the matter any further. Mostly because he was too afraid to. He'd already been shot down multiple times when asking about Atticus, he didn't want to make Vegeta angry at him.

Without saying anything further, Goku helped Vegeta unpack the groceries, but ultimately left it up to Vegeta to put the stuff where it belonged. He did take out the container of ice cream, however, opening up the pack.

Grabbing a paper bowl and spoon, he dipped himself out some, watching from the tablet as Vegeta slowly sorted through everything.

"Hey, you forgot to put up the ice cream." Vegeta scolded him, noticing the container he'd left on the cabinet.

"Oh, whoops. Sorry." Goku started to get up.

"It's fine, I'll take care of it." Vegeta sighed, grabbing it and putting it up in the freezer, before sitting down at the table with a bowl of cereal and his phone.

As Goku ate away at his ice cream, Vegeta looked back up at him, drawn to the white liquid covering Goku's mouth.

Goku's tongue slowly flicked over the ice cream in the spoon. He was clearly savoring the taste of it.

Vegeta swallowed, his heart racing in his chest.

He's so cute…

Out of nowhere, just like at the festival, erotic images suddenly popped into his head.

*I'd kind of like… for him to… do that to **me** one day…*

Heat spread to his groin like wildfire as he watched him.

His eyes widened when he realized the impact it was having on him.

*Shit **shitshit** ! Not again! What the hell is **wrong** with me?!*

*I'm such an idiot! What am I even **thinking** ?!*

He cursed himself again and again, covering his face and clawing at his hair. At the festival, he'd simply blamed it on the alcohol, but the thoughts were back again, just as rampant as they were the last time. And the worst thing was he was completely sober this time.

His throat burned. *Why do I keep **imagining** these things…?*

Vegeta…?" Goku's cheeks flushed when he turned towards him, catching his eyes. The spoon was still in his mouth.

"Huh…?" Vegeta's ears turned red. His voice was weak and his hands felt clammy. He could only hope Goku wouldn't notice. Damn *body.*

"You okay?" Goku grabbed another spoonful of ice cream. "Ya seem nervous."

"I was? Sorry. I've… just got a lot on my mind." Vegeta turned away, his heart racing in his chest.

I can't think about him that way… It's no better than that bastard Atticus.

I won't… I refuse to be like him.

It's wrong of me…

Knowing everything that man did to him…

How much it traumatized him.

I can't… feel those things…

"Here, you want a bite?" Goku offered, holding up the spoon to Vegeta's mouth with a grin.

"Oh, uh, sure." Vegeta took the ice cream into his mouth, a burst of flavor hitting his tongue. His eyes lit up slightly as he swallowed it.

Goku watched him with a small blush, but sweet smile. "See? It's good, right?"

"Yeah, it tastes fine…" Vegeta whispered.

It was just like before.

So innocent.

He had no clue.

"So…? Do I get to call that an indirect kiss then?" Goku smirked a bit, hoping it would loosen him up a bit.

"Hey!" Vegeta's face heated up. "You tricked me!"

"Maybe~!" Goku teased. "So *do* I?"

"Tch…! Fine… D-Do whatever you want." Vegeta grumbled.

"...By the way… I uh… kinda wanted to ask you something… If you don't mind…" Goku gazed down, resting his cheek in his hand.

"What is it?" Vegeta's expression softened.

"Well, it's um… In a few weeks from now… May 22nd. You know… The day that Grandpa died…? Well…, I was wondering…" Goku fidgeted nervously. He had put the spoon back in the bowl. "If you'd be willing to come with me to visit his grave again… Like we have the last couple times. You don't… mind, do you…?"

"No, of course not…" Vegeta assured him, grabbing his hand and intertwining their fingers. "On that morning, we'll go and get him some flowers, just like we always do… Alright?"

"Alright…" Goku smiled softly. "Thanks, Vegeta…"

Vegeta kissed his knuckles. "Yeah… don't mention it."

…

| *Journal Entry 1 (April 13th, 780)*

My therapist told me I should try writing in a journal, but, to be honest, I'm not really sure what to write about.

So many things have been happening lately…

I've been having a lot of trouble dealing with stuff and to make matters worse, my boyfriend's really worrying me.

Ever since I got out of the hospital, he's been acting strange, like something is bothering him, but he never tells me what. I just wish he'd talk to me.

I can't stand being kept in the dark like this.

…

| *Journal Entry 2 (April 14th, 780)*

Vegeta got drunk earlier. I'm not really sure why, but he was crying.

I noticed some more bruises on his neck. He looked like he had been strangled.

Actually, I've been seeing marks like that on him a lot lately. They're always in the same places. He says he's been training with Atticus, but I feel like he's hiding something.

The other day, I think Atticus groped him.

I can't say for certain about it, but Vegeta looked really uncomfortable when it happened. I tried to ask him about it, but he told me it was nothing, and said to stay out of it.

I've never seen him like this before.

He seems scared of him.

...

| *Journal Entry 3 (April 17th, 780)*

Vegeta's thighs were bruised terribly earlier.

I've never seen anything like it.

Is it really just from sparring?

I don't know anymore.

…

| *Journal Entry 4 (April 18th, 780)*

Vegeta got me a cake for my birthday earlier. It tasted good.

It was Carrot Cake, though, so I think he just did it to mess with me.

…

| *Journal Entry 5, (April 22nd, 780)*

Today, Vegeta sang to me again. I wish I could hear him sing more often. His voice is so pretty. But it always makes me so emotional for some reason. I feel like I've heard that song somewhere, yet I can never place where it's from. I wish I knew. I'm kinda embarrassed to ask for some reason. It seems personal to him.

…

| *Journal Entry 6, (April 29th, 780)*

Atticus scares me. I'm convinced that something is wrong with him. I keep hearing him rambling nonsense from down the hall. Maybe he's drunk, but it sounds psychotic. Vegeta said to ignore it. I'm trying, but it's so creepy.

…

| *Journal Entry 7, (April 30th, 780)*

Atticus punched Vegeta in the face earlier. He was mad because he had forgotten to buy him alcohol. It really pissed me off seeing him get treated that way, but Vegeta stopped me from doing anything and apologized to him.

...

| *Journal Entry 8, (May 9th, 780)*

I had another relapse earlier, or at least started to. Vegeta stopped me before I could do much. I was upset because of a nightmare. Thanks to the medication, I don't have them very often anymore, but they still trigger me from time to time.

...

| *Journal Entry 9, (May 14th, 780)*

I really miss Grandpa right now. I don't talk about him a lot, and I'm trying to move forward, but it's so hard sometimes.

...

| ***Journal Entry 10, (May 15th, 780)***

I wish I were with him. Sometimes, I just want to give up, but Vegeta needs me right now.

....

| *Journal Entry 11, (May 16th, 780)*

I want to cut myself so badly right now, but Vegeta locked away all the razors and sharp objects.

I hate this

I could go somewhere, but it seems too much hassle just to grab a knife or razor. Plus, I don't really feel comfortable leaving Vegeta alone with Atticus right now.

| ***Journal Entry 12, (May 17th, 780)***

*GET OFF GET O **F** F OFF **GET OFF GET OFF***

I WANT TO DIE

...

| *Journal Entry 13, (May 19th, 780)*

I wish Vegeta would stop drinking. I'm starting to wonder if Atticus is rubbing off on him. He was acting strange again earlier. It's kinda scaring me.

...

| *Journal Entry 14, (May 22nd, 780)*

I didn't get much sleep last night, so I'm really tired right now. But today, Vegeta's planning on going with me to visit Grandpa's grave. I can't express how grateful I am for how much he's done for me over these past couple years. I really owe him.

Still... I can't help but worry about him. When I woke up earlier, I noticed there were more bruises on his neck and wrists. But it's so strange. As far as I can tell, Atticus just stays in his room most of the time and Vegeta's usually with me. So when is all of this happening?

...

Goku put up his journal, getting up from the desk and walking over to the sleeping frame of his lover, who was laying on the bed.

He crawled up on the bed next to him, reaching out and grazing some fingers over the dark marks littering Vegeta's neck, trying his best to avoid focusing on the ones on his legs.

Vegeta...

What's happened to you...?

What's the deal with you and Atticus...?

Just who is he to you…?

And why do you seem so afraid of him…?

Resting his head against Vegeta's chest, he wrapped his arm around him, closing his eyes.

Why won't you tell me anything…?

"Kakarot…?" A tired voice.

Goku looked up to see dark eyes meeting his.

"Hey… Morning…" He gave a lopsided smile, relieved to see him awake again. "How are you feeling?"

"I'm fine… But I should be asking *you* that, Kakarot, considering the date and all…" Vegeta replied groggily.

"Well, to be honest, I didn't really get good sleep last night." Goku admitted. "I woke up around 3 AM."

"Really?" Vegeta's fingers curled around Goku's hair, with a gentle expression. "You should have told me... I'd have given you some more of your medication. It's no good if you don't get any rest."

"It's fine… I can just sleep some this evening once we come back." Goku said. "If anything I'm more worried about you. I feel like you're training yourself into exhaustion."

"I'll be fine. Just focus on yourself right now." *If only he knew* .

"Hey… Why don't we go get some breakfast before we go? There's a Bagel House not too far from there. They have a lot of different stuff to choose from…"

"Actually, that doesn't sound half bad right now." Vegeta noted.

"Your treat?" Goku gazed at him with cute eyes.

"I don't know, Kakarot… Why should I?" Vegeta's hand ran down Goku's backside, but there was no ill will behind it. "What do I get out of it?"

"Well, I'll give you lots of hugs for it later…" Goku purred.

"That's all…? I think I deserve a little more than that." Vegeta teased.

"Okay… and kisses too…" Goku puffed his cheeks out.

"Now that's more like it." Vegeta smirked a bit, his fingers brushing over Goku's tail scar by accident.

"Ng… Vegeta… That's…" Goku moaned slightly, hiding his face in Vegeta's chest.

"Oh, sorry." Vegeta pulled his hand away, worried that he'd upset him.

"No, it's okay… It felt… nice…" Goku murmured, shyly.

"It did…?" Vegeta's heart pounded in his chest..

"Mhm." Goku nodded, his ears turning red.

"Can I… touch you there *more* , then…? Or do you mind…?" Vegeta asked, tentatively.

"No, I don't mind… if it's you…" Goku peeked his face out of Vegeta's chest ever so slightly.

"If you're… sure about it." Hesitantly, Vegeta slipped a few fingers into Goku's pants to softly stroke the spot.

"Ah…" Goku moaned again in response, clutching at the fabric of Vegeta's shirt, barely able to contain himself. Every shift in pressure sent him closer to the brink of arousal, tears welling up in his eyes.

Vegeta watched him with a blush.

It's an erogenous zone…?

I had no idea the Saiyan tail could be used this way for some people…

Shit…

When he's reacting this way… It makes it hard to control myself…

"Eep!" Goku's eyes widened when he felt something poking at his stomach. He jumped back. "Vegeta, you're… hard?"

Vegeta's face flushed bright red. He covered himself with the blankets. "Fuck! Ignore that! It's not what it looks like!"

"It's *me* , isn't it…?" Goku's own cheeks tinged pink. "You got hard because of me…"

"I… It's not my fault you kept moaning…! I-I couldn't help it!" Vegeta stammered, looking down, desperate to avoid his gaze. It was just too embarrassing.

"I'm sorry… Do you… Want me to… you know…" Goku trailed off, too shy to continue. Pleasuring him was the least he could offer for making things so awkward between them.

"That's really not necessary! I'll take care of it." Vegeta awkwardly got up. He knew Goku meant well, but he just *couldn't* . Not like that.

"Oh, okay…" Goku looked down, feeling a bit dejected as Vegeta ran off of the room towards the bathroom. He couldn't blame him though. The matter of his natural inclinations aside, there were still times he wanted nothing to do with sex simply because of the trauma.

Still… Vegeta told me he wanted to do it, back when we were in the hospital.

So did something change that?

Have I… done something… to scare him off somehow?

Something I'm not aware of?

Or did he just say that… because he wanted to make me feel better?

How would I even be able to tell something like that…?

Maybe he doesn't like me like that, after all…

If that's true…

I just wish he'd talk to me about it.

Because I was kind of looking forward to it…

But if he doesn't want that… I guess I can't blame him…

After everything that man did to me…

*Who **would** …?*

Doubts about his body once again resurfaced, self-loathing hitting him like bricks.

Moisture blurred his vision. Biting his lip, he wiped it away as fast as he could.

Why am I crying? Stupid…

"Hey! Kakarot!"

Goku's heart skipped a beat when there was a banging noise at the door frame.

He jumped back up, looked over to see Atticus standing there.

"Atticus! What's up?" Goku asked, nervously. "Need something?"

"Yeah, where's the alcohol?" Atticus demanded.

"Uh... I'm not sure. I haven't touched it." Goku scooted back a bit when Atticus started to approach him. "I don't drink alcohol, so it should be in the same place it was earlier. Unless Vegeta moved it."

"Come with me." Atticus pulled him off the bed by his shirt. "You'll show me, won't you?"

"I…" Goku started to resist, but Atticus's grip was too strong, so he had no choice but to be pulled along.

They were about half way down the hall before Vegeta came out.

"Hey, what are you doing? Get away from him!" Vegeta glared at Atticus, enveloping Goku into his arms, protectively. "If you need something, you talk to ***me***, *not him*."

"Fine by me." Atticus muttered, letting go. "Just tell me where the alcohol is already."

"I-It's on the bottom shelf in the very back. I moved them…" Vegeta swallowed.

"Oh… I was looking in drawers. I'll go and look there instead. You had better not be lying to me." Atticus growled, walking off.

Vegeta immediately urged Goku back into his room.

"Hey, are you okay? He didn't hurt you, did he?" Vegeta scanned him over for injuries, worry consuming him.

"Well, my arm is a little sore, but I'm okay otherwise… Don't worry about it." Goku assured him.

"I'm sorry. He had no right to touch you like that… He's not even supposed to be *talking* to you. I told him not to." Vegeta murmured.

"Vegeta… I really don't *like* him. And I don't like the way he treats you either..." Goku snarled, tears welling up in his eyes. "I want him out of here…"

Vegeta wrapped his arms around him, all of their previous discussions forgotten. He kissed Goku's ear. Telling him the only thing he could. "He will be soon, I promise. Then you'll never have to see him again."

"Why don't we just go stay somewhere else, like a hotel, or… even capsule corp would be better than this…" Goku insisted.

"Because… It's like I told you before. That man is dangerous…" Vegeta spoke vaguely once again. "If I'm gone for too long, he's liable to hurt somebody… It can't be helped that he's much stronger than I am right now…"

"Yeah, but… If we use fusion-" Goku started to say, without even processing his own words.

"No. Listen…" Vegeta cut him off. "I don't want you to become his enemy, under *any circumstances*, do you understand?"

Goku hesitated, but finally nodded. "Okay…"

Pulling him into a hug, Vegeta kissed him on the cheek again.

"...All of that aside, there's no reason you should have to be stuck around a person like him. So if you want to go somewhere else right now, I won't stop you." He mumbled.

"No, I wanna stay with you." Goku insisted, tugging at his shirt, not wanting to be separated from Vegeta again.

"I understand…" Vegeta mumbled. "Hey, let's get around and go eat. Get our minds off of him for a while."

"Kay…" Always that same cute response that Vegeta adored so much.

…

The Bagel House was packed when Goku and Vegeta got there. Thankfully, they were able to find a table. Vegeta ended up having to make the orders because Goku couldn't decide on what to eat. Or rather he didn't *want* to.

Goku had been quiet since earlier.

It was frustrating.

"Aren't you going to eat your biscuit…?" He gestured towards the unopened pack.

"I'm not hungry." Goku muttered, looking away.

"Kakarot, I heard your stomach growling just a few minutes ago when we were in the car, so you and I both know that's a lie."

Goku's cheeks turned pink, but he didn't say anything.

"Come on, your grandfather would want you to eat right now." Vegeta jabbed lightly at Goku's leg with his foot. "Surely, you don't want to go there on an empty stomach, do you…?"

There was a long moment of silence, before - slowly - Goku picked up the biscuit, unwrapping it.

Vegeta felt a wave of relief wash over him as Goku began to take bite after bite until it was gone. "That's it. That was good. You want some of your sweat tea?"

Goku took a small sip, but gave a sour expression almost immediately after.

"I feel sick." He lowered his head. The urge to throw it up was almost too strong to handle.

"I know… But you need to be strong. I know you can do it." Vegeta said, as softly as he could manage.

"I'm trying… I just…" Goku uttered, tears forming again. "really miss him…"

He was digging into his arm again.

Vegeta hated it when Goku got like this. He had to do something.

"No… Kakarot, come here…" Getting up, he moved around the table to sit down next to him, enveloping him in an embrace.

Goku's body suddenly felt so small and fragile in his arms, like the smallest wrong touch could break him.

Vegeta gently ran some fingers through his hair, whispering words of comfort into his ears, anything he could do to get him to stop crying.

Slowly, his efforts paid off and Goku relaxed.

But still, Vegeta did not stop. Holding him tightly, he kissed his cheek and then his neck to show him just how much he meant to him. That he was there for him.

What can I do for him?

To make this easier…?

I wish I had an answer.

…

Seeing Gohan's grave was always just as difficult as the last time for Goku. If anything, the guilt he felt ever since finding out the truth seemed to increase every time he came back here.

He sat down, placing the flowers down as sat in front of the grave, followed by Vegeta.

For what felt like hours, nothing was said, until Goku finally spoke back up. "Back when Grandpa died, I... I had a lot of trouble with certain foods, different fruits and vegetables... Things that he liked. For the longest time, I didn't even want to eat fish anymore, because it reminded me of him... It was like... this voice telling me... He's supposed to be here... so I shouldn't eat this without him... It made me feel guilty for some reason... I didn't know the truth about the great ape form back then. It was just a thought... that maybe I didn't deserve to eat... Later, after finding out what I had done to him..., I sometimes thought about those things again, even though I never really acted on them until... what happened with that man..."

"I thought it was just the rape... I didn't know it was... related to that as well... I'm….. sorry..." Vegeta looked away briefly, trying to gather his thoughts.

"Well, yeah, that was certainly part of it." Goku said. "Cuz it only really resurfaced after what he did to me, and I had never purged before that…"

"Thoughts are one thing, but... I hope you don't actually *believe* them..." Vegeta met his gaze again. "You *do* deserve to eat, Kakarot..."

"Yeah... I know..." Goku sounded like he was having a hard time saying it, which hinted he was still apprehensive about it. Still, he offered a small sweet smile to show his gratitude. "By the way, thanks again. For coming here with me..."

"It's no problem..." Vegeta gazed down at flowers, deciding to drop it for the time being. "I really don't mind it. Not when I know how important this is to you."

"Heh... It's kinda hard to believe it's been two years since all of this started, I mean... with me and you..." Goku pulled his knees up to his chest. "All the same, so much has happened since then, and to be honest, I don't really know where my life is headed right now, but... even so..."

He reached over, shyly intertwining their fingers. "I'm really glad that you're in it, Vegeta... it means more to me than you could ever know."

"...Well..." Vegeta's thumb brushed over Goku's hand. "For whatever it's worth... I feel the same way, about you..."

"Sometimes... I really wish... you could have met him... my Grandpa, I'm sure he would have liked you..." Goku gave a sad smile.

"...Heh, I doubt it... I tend to make enemies pretty quickly..." Vegeta joked. "But still… I'm sure he was a good man."

"He was..." Goku murmured, before he smiled. "And hey, who knows, maybe you will get to meet him one day, ya think?"

"No way. I told you already. When I die, I'll be going straight to hell. Of that one, I'm sure." Vegeta made no attempts to sugarcoat it. "I've spent far too much time hurting others. A few good deeds isn't going to change all that... Although, come to think of it, when that happens... The two of us will be separated, like before..."

"Yeah, maybe." Goku pondered it. "All the same... I like you just fine the way you are now... So... if things do happen to go sour... I'll make sure to come visit you, no matter where you are."

"Idiot... is that your way of *flirting* with me? By saying you'd come visit me in hell?" Vegeta moved closer with an amused expression. "You're something else, you know that...? But... I like you too."

Goku blushed slightly when Vegeta's lips met his cheek.

"Hey, I've got an idea..." Vegeta spoke back up a moment later, resting his face on Goku's shoulder.

"What is it?" Goku asked.

"Why don't we go fishing?" Vegeta suggested.

"Wh-what, right now?" Goku stammered.

"Yeah, are you interested?" Vegeta asked. "It can be our meal this evening."

"Oh, uh, sure." Goku took a moment to process it. "Just give me a moment, okay?"

He turned back to the grave, adjusting the flowers a bit.

"Of course, take your time." Vegeta stood up, watching him with a fond expression.

After a long time, Goku stood up. "Okay, I'm ready."

Vegeta grabbed his hand, smirking as he pulled him along. "Then come on."

Goku laughed. "I'm coming. I'm coming. Don't pull me."

…

"Man, I'm beat." Goku didn't even hesitate to hop in bed that night. Between visiting his grandfather's grave, fishing, going to the store, cooking their meal that night, and several other things, he was not only physically exhausted, but emotionally too.

"It's no wonder… You said earlier that you've been awake since 3 AM. I'd be tired too." Vegeta pulled off his shirt, placing it on the dresser, before bringing Goku his medication. "Here. Take this."

"Thanks…" Goku swallowed it, before turning over.

"Don't mention it." Vegeta crawled into the bed next to him, hesitantly spooning him. "Also… remember… We have a party to go to tomorrow, so get some good rest for me, okay…?"

"Kay." Goku closed his eyes, blushing a bit.

It wasn't long before he fell asleep, leaving Vegeta to his thoughts. But Goku wasn't the only one who was tired.

So was Vegeta.

I'm so exhausted right now, *I can barely keep my eyes open…*

Atticus will probably get angry if I don't come to him immediately, but a few minutes can't hurt anything, right?

I need to sleep.

Unable to stay awake any longer, Vegeta quickly ended up falling asleep as well, just long enough until he was woken up again by the sound of crying.

Goku was having another nightmare.

"Kakarot…?" Vegeta sat up, starting to brush a hand through Goku's hair. "Hey… It's okay… Shh…"

Hoping it would do the trick without having to wake him back up, Vegeta rubbed his back and head in a soothing manner.

This tactic didn't always succeed, but sometimes it did, and, fortunately, this time, it seemed to be doing the trick. Even in his sleep, he was somehow processing Vegeta's words and actions. Whatever he was seeing, he knew that his lover was right there with him.

Slowly, Goku began to calm down, uttering his name in his sleep. "Ve…geta."

"It's okay… I'm right here…" Vegeta kissed his crown. "Shh… Everything's going to be okay… I-"

"Vegeta..." Atticus cut him off, entering the room before he could say anything. *"Get out here..."*

Vegeta's blood ran cold. Of all the times. *"Atticus, wait, just hold on....! Just a little longer, please... He's having a nightmare, he needs me right now. I-"*

"I don't care, I've waited long enough, you can deal with him afterwards." Atticus approached him aggressively.

"No, just hold on, it's only a few minutes. Then I'll go with you. Whatever you want, I swear. But I need to make sure he's okay first. He's crying!"

*"I said that can **wait** , get up."* Atticus grabbed his wrist, pulling him out of bed by force.

"Vege…ta…" Goku moaned in his sleep again when Vegeta was separated from him. He started reaching out, as if trying to find him. Tears fell down his cheeks.

The sight destroyed Vegeta. *"Please, Atticus! I can't leave him right now."*

"Shut up, and keep walking. You'll get to be with your boyfriend again after you sing to me." Atticus pushed him through the door and into the hallway.

The sound of sobbing could be heard, as Goku fell into a panic in his sleep, calling out for Vegeta again.

"No…! I'll sing to you later… I need to be with him…" Vegeta vehemently fought back, but Atticus was simply too strong, dragging him down the stairs against his will.

"Stop struggling. You'll do as I say…!" Atticus had a hold on his wrist, his other hand clutching at the back of Vegeta's collar, pushing him down to the first floor and forcing him outside despite his protests. "You've let me fuck you every other night, so why does tonight matter so much?"

The question was of course, rhetorical, he wasn't asking for an explanation.

Atticus made quick work of forcing him into the gravity chamber and pushing him down on the floor by his throat.

"You don't understand…! If he wakes up now, he's liable to hurt himself! Please, Atticus…! Just give me a little more time…!" Vegeta attempted to push him off of him to no avail.

"I said shut up!" Atticus slapped him. "I'm tired of hearing all of your *whining* ! You're so **annoying** . Kakarot *this* , that Kakarot *that* ! Just shut up about him already! You focus on me while you're in here, and nobody else!"

Atticus ripped off Vegeta's clothes in a mere instant, more abrupt and harsher than ever.

Vegeta was left silently crying after that, not resisting any longer.

Cooperate and Endure.

****RAPE SCENE AHEAD****

Disgust consumed him when he felt a cold hand starting to explore his body, the familiar heat rushing through his groin.

"Such a beautiful body. You're so hot. Mn… I just can't help myself." Atticus grinded against him, becoming harder by the moment. "To be honest with you… I highly doubt your precious Kakarot

would love you anymore if he found out how much of a filthy whore you are. Knowing the man he looks up to so much… Gets boners any time another man *touches* him. You're so unfaithful. But I like that naughty side to you… It's sexy."

Vegeta stifled sob after sob. He wanted nothing more than for this to end.

Why does this always happen to me? He cursed himself. His lover was having a nightmare, but here he was unable to stop his dick from getting hard for another man. He hated this. It wasn't any better than cheating, even if it *was* rape.

Tears fell down his cheeks, as he turned his head away. "Stop mocking me, and just get it over with already."

"Uh-uh. Not yet… I told you, I want to hear you sing for me, remember? I know you've done it for Kakarot. I thought that was our thing." Atticus purred, biting his neck.

"He needs me, Atticus… Please don't do this to me…" He weakly pled again, already knowing by his body language that Atticus was planning to take his precious time, just to mess with him. In that moment, past images of Goku cutting himself, the near death state he had found him in on Beerus's world - *blood, so much blood, staining his gloves* - it flashed before him, sending Vegeta into another panic. He tried to resist, but Atticus's hold on his body was simply too strong. "Listen, I promise I'll sing to you when I know that he's okay..."

"I told before, you can go back to him *after we're done here* ." Atticus muttered, yanking at his hair. "So hurry up, ion got all night."

Feeling defeated, Vegeta finally caved and did as told, crying out in anguish when Atticus filled him.

…

Vegeta had long since gotten used to having his body stolen from him, taken on Atticus's whim. Violently fucked over and over again until he couldn't even sit straight because of how badly it had hurt him. Even broken bones.

But this was something else. Goku needed him right now. He had to be there.

Emotion after emotion began to flow through him each time Atticus thrusted into him, causing him to sob even harder than the physical pain he was in.

Self-loathing.

Guilt.

Panic.

Disgust.

Fear.

Humiliation.

Dissociation.

And anger.

Anger , at not only Atticus, but at *himself* , for not being stronger; for letting his body *betray* him like this. Just knowing that he was letting this happen while Goku was asleep, while Goku was crying out for *him* , it was more than he could stand for.

So maybe that's why he did it.

…

"What's the matter? I told you to keep singing…!" Atticus demanded when Vegeta stopped.

"No… I can't keep lying to him like this." A sudden urge to fight back again. *Pull away* . "I have to go to him."

Every bone in his bottom felt like it had been broken, but, still, he knew he had to move.

"Uh-uh-uh. You're not going *anywhere,* little prince ... Not until I'm satisfied." Atticus dug into his thighs as Vegeta struggled under his grasp. "I still need to cum first. I think you can afford to wait a few minutes. Now hurry up and keep singing."

"I *won't* ! I refuse!" Vegeta growled. " *Let go of me* !"

"Stay still and do what I tell you, damn it!" Atticus was spitting on him. He grabbed him by his throat, his skin marred due to his nails. "I said ***stop it*** , or I'll break your neck and ***make*** you."

"Just try it, I *dare* you!" With every bit of strength he had, despite the awkward position they were in, Vegeta just barely managed to kick him in the groin, stunning him long enough to escape his grip and force Atticus into pulling out of him.

RAPE SCENE END

Grabbing his crotch in pain, Atticus shouted, swiping a fist at him, but Vegeta jumped out of the way so the wall ended up cracked instead.

Getting up and stumbling to the door, Vegeta left, his heart pounding in his ears.

Once Atticus recovered, he glared at the open door.

"Damn that brat. He's going to pay for that."

…

Shit. Shit. Shit.

Atticus is going to kill me.

I can't believe I just did that….

What the hell is wrong with me…?

No, I had to, Kakarot needs me…

I have to get back to him.

Vegeta rushed into the bedroom, locking the door in a panic. Not that it would do any good if Atticus decided to come in, but he didn't care. He was too nerve wracked to process it.

"Vegeta…? What's going on?" A voice startled him. It was Goku. The commotion must have woken him up.

"It's nothing. Go back to sleep…" Vegeta moved into the bed next to him, pulling him into his arms.

Goku's vision was somewhat blurry, but after a moment, he was able to make out that Vegeta was naked. There were bloody scratch marks all over his body, especially on his neck and legs.

"Is everything okay…?" Goku asked, half asleep. "Why are you crying…?"

"Shh… I'm fine… you don't need to worry…" Vegeta soothed him, kissing his forehead. "I just need you to rest for me, alright?"

"Oh, okay…" As Vegeta's fingers ran through his hair in a soothing manner, Goku slowly relaxed again, closing his eyes. He was too tired and out of it to truly process it, so in the end, he dozed back off, completely oblivious to what it just happened.

…

Vegeta laid on the bed that night, expecting Atticus to come after him. He couldn't rest.

If he fell asleep, both he and Goku would be in danger, he had to stay awake. Goku was defenseless as he was now.

So with dawn approaching, Vegeta stayed by Goku's side, holding onto him protectively.

Tighter than ever.

…

"Hurry up and get around. We're almost late as it is."

"Yeah, I know, I know, I'm tryin, okay? Don't rush me."

"We're wasting time, we need to go." Vegeta watched later that morning as Goku struggled to pull his pants on.

"I said I know. Why are you acting this way?" Goku looked at him, he could tell that Vegeta was on edge and he didn't know why.

"It's not important. I-" Vegeta started to ask.

"So where are you two going?" Atticus asked, stepping inside the bedroom door without permission.

Goku immediately turned away, embarrassed. But continued pulling on his clothes.

"It's none of your business, but if you must know. We're going to a party." Vegeta grumbled.

"A party? Will there be alcohol?" Atticus wanted to know.

"Probably." Vegeta sneered. Maybe Atticus had got the picture after being kicked in the nuts and that's why he hadn't done anything.

No. That definitely wasn't it.

"Then take me with you." Atticus slurred.

"What?" Vegeta looked at him. Goku too seemed confused.

"I said take me to the party. Hard of hearing?" Atticus glared at him.

A chill ran down Vegeta's spine. He stiffened up, looking down. "No. W-we'll take you…"

What's with him…? Goku wondered, but didn't say anything. In that moment, the images from the night before suddenly popped into his head. He had been so tired at the time that he hadn't questioned it much, but…

Hold on… I vaguely remember something… Vegeta was crying last night. And he was naked… but not only that… There were scratch marks on his body, especially his legs and neck… Something bad must have happened between him and Atticus…

But what…?

Some kind of struggle?

His heart dropped in his chest like never before, as the image of Vegeta being groped by Atticus flashed through his head.

The drinking.

The bruises.

The sudden fear of sex.

The limping.

His strange behavior lately.

And how afraid Vegeta was of Atticus.

The realization hit him like bricks.

*No… It **couldn't** be.*

…

onto part 2

Even The Strongest [Part 2/2]

[Part 2]

The party was lively.

Bulma had had drinks upon drinks set out. Food items galore to choose from.

Of course, not everybody came. Krillin and 18 had already had their own family vacation planned so they turned the offer down, and Yamcha couldn't make it either because of baseball practice. Similarly, Gohan was too caught up in his studies to even have the chance to focus on anything else.

Piccolo, Chichi, and Goten, however, *did* come.

But unfortunately, so had others.

Namely, Atticus, for obvious reasons.

Vegeta was sitting more off to the side, watching Goku with a protective eye as he interacted with everybody.

"Goku, it's been so long. How have you been?" Chichi asked upon seeing him.

"I'm alright." Goku scratched the back of his head with a sheepish grin. "You and Goten seem like you're doing well. That's good."

"Oh, we've been getting by." Chichi said, before lowering her voice. "So how was the trial? Bulma told me he was locked away."

"Yeah, he was… For 10 years." Goku said.

"Only *ten years* ? Ugh, if it was left up to me, that monster would have never seen the light of day again." Chichi growled, drawing a fist. "I'll bet it's because you're a man, *isn't* it? Those cases never get fair justice… Oh, that reminds me. Goten! Did you say you had a gift for your Father?"

"Oh, I forgot! Hold on." Goten stumbled over, fumbling with something in his pocket. When he held it up, it was some kind of pendant, although there was no string attached to it. "Here, Dad. It's a good luck charm, to help you feel better."

"Oh wow, thanks, Goten. This means a lot to me." Goku smiled. "I'll bet you really saved up your allowance for this one m, didn't you?"

"Mhm." Goten murmured, blushing a bit as Goku ruffled his hair.

"That was thoughtful of you. I'll be sure to keep this with me at all times, okay?" Goku grinned. "That way if anything bad happens, I'll see it and remember that you're looking out for me."

"Okay." Goten moved over awkwardly, before hugging him. "I want you to get better. I don't want you to be sad anymore…"

"I'm doing much better now, but thank you." Goku hugged him back with a fond expression before letting go. "Why don't you go again and play with Trunks again, yeah?"

"Kay." Goten replied, running off again.

"He's a good kid, isn't he…?" Goku's smile softened even further as he turned back to Chichi.

"Well, he is *your son* , after all." Chichi remarked.

Goku gave a small chuckle.

"So what's this I hear about a trial?" Piccolo's voice caught Goku's attention.

"Piccolo!" Goku jumped, turning to face him. He had forgotten how good of hearing Piccolo had. Of course he would have heard. "That's…"

"Did somebody do something to you?" Piccolo wanted to know.

"Mn. No-I mean yes, but i-it's complicated… I'd… kinda rather not talk about it." Goku lowered his head.

"Well, alright. Just let me know if you need anything, alright?" Piccolo brushed a hand against his shoulder.

"Yeah, thanks, Piccolo. I'll talk to you later, Chichi." Ignoring their responses, Goku made his leave from the conversation as quickly as possible, heading back over to where Vegeta was sitting with his eyes closed.

"What do you want, Kakarot?" Vegeta muttered, feeling Goku's face in his.

"Well, that's no way to talk to your boyfriend." Goku pouted. "I was gonna ask if you wanted to dance with me."

"What? No way." Vegeta snuffed his nose at the very idea of it.

"Oh, come on. It could be fun. Please?" Goku curled up against him.

"I said no and I meant it. Besides, since when do you care about dancing anyways?" Vegeta scoffed. It was so out of character, that honestly it had caught him off guard.

"I don't, but still, I wanna try it." Goku rationalized. He seemed to be hiding something, but what?

"Try it…, Kakarot, are you really saying you've never *danced* before…? Outside of the fusion dance, I mean." Vegeta stared at him with disbelief.

"No, not with a partner anyways. I'm not really sure how to." Goku lowered his head a bit.

"...Surely, you're joking." Vegeta had never been more shocked.

"Don't mock me. Can't you just show me? You've done it with Bulma before, right…? So I was thinking that you and I could do it too…"

"That's-I-ugh… Fine…" When it was worded like that, it wasn't like Vegeta could refuse. He couldn't just say yes to Bulma then say no to Goku. Getting up, he started to walk off, gesturing for Goku to follow him. "Come with me. We're going to an area where there's not as many people around, but we can still hear the music."

"Uh, alright." Goku's cheeks tinged pink when Vegeta awkwardly took his hand.

A couple minutes later, Vegeta found a decent spot in a more secluded area of the cruise they were on.

"Here. This should work. Now. I want you to stand here and put your arm around my shoulder." He instructed.

"Like this?" Goku did as told.

"Yes." Vegeta held onto Goku's other hand and wrapping his own around Goku's waist. It was a bit strange because of the height difference. But Goku didn't seem to mind. "I'm going to start moving now, and I want you to follow my lead."

As Vegeta began, Goku tried his best to respond, but accidentally fumbled up, stepping on Vegeta's foot.. "Ah-sorry…"

"It's alright. But you're moving too fast. Try to slow down some." Vegeta said, pulling him to the side. "You need to be in sync with me for this to work."

"In sync, got it…" Goku considered his words with uncertainty. He gazed down again at Vegeta's neck, suddenly distracted again by the scratch marks.

I *need to ask him… about Atticus… Maybe… if I can loosen him up a little bit, he'll open up about it…*

No, what if he gets angry at me again…?

Should I really pry into that…? He told me to stay out of it…

And I trust him… So… surely, he'd have told me… if something was going on, wouldn't he?

But still… he was crying last night…

And he was naked too…

He seemed panicked…

What happened?

I wish he'd tell me…

If it's what I think it is, then…

Goku paused. Then *what* ?

What could I do to protect him?

Atticus is so much stronger than I am…

He's stronger than both of us…

So… even if I tried to fight him, I'd just make things worse than they already are…

Goku had never felt more helpless than he did in that moment.

Vegeta, I…

"Kakarot…?" Vegeta's voice cut off his thought process.

"Oh, sorry… Maybe we should go a bit faster…?"

"Faster? We could, but I usually prefer slower dances. It's easier to keep up with." Vegeta said, hoping it wouldn't upset him. And it's less *embarrassing* .

Not that he would admit that out loud.

"Oh, okay." Goku fortunately seemed open to adjusting his movements so they were mirroring Vegeta's.

While Vegeta's focus remained on Goku's face, Goku kept looking down at their feet, afraid of stepping on him again, or tripping.

"I'm no good at this." Goku said.

"You're d-doing fine..." Vegeta reassured, his own face heating up. "Stop worrying."

"That's easy for you to say. You've done this before, so of course you're not as nervous." Goku replied in frustration.

"Hey! I'm just as nervous about this as *you* are…! And this was your idea in the first place, Kakarot, so don't start getting pouty with me because you can't handle it." Vegeta growled a bit harsher than intended.

Goku puffed his cheeks out. "Okay, now you're just being mean to me..."

"Mn…" Vegeta's response caught in his throat at hearing that. He looked away, a pit forming in his stomach. "I'm sorry… There, I apologized… Are you satisfied now…?"

"No…" Goku muttered. "I want a kiss first…"

"...Tch. So that's what this was about…?" Vegeta feigned irritation. "You wanted to make me feel guilty so I'd kiss you, is that it…?"

"If I said yes, would you be mad at me…?" The corners of Goku's lips tugged upwards playfully.

"...I don't know." Vegeta smirked a bit, causing Goku to let out a small "eep" as he pulled him towards him tightly in his arm. "That depends. if I find the kiss to be to my liking, I *might* let it slide…"

"Alright… You're on." Goku didn't even hesitate to let Vegeta claim his mouth, more passionate than usual. Blaming this on the alcohol he had drank shortly after arriving at the party, the prince ran a hand down brushing against the tail scar on Goku's backside like he had the day before.

Goku was a bit startled at first, but soon allowed himself to fully embrace Vegeta, melting into the kiss.

That was until they were interrupted by the sound of a camera flashing, a light going off in the corner of his eyes. He froze up, his breath hitching.

"Hey!" Vegeta snapped with a bright blush, looking over to see a man standing there. He appeared to be a staff member who was holding a large camera in his hand. Probably a photographer whose job was to gather pictures to hang up on a wall or something.

But it was still irritating, and he hadn't received permission from them.

Goku's grip on Vegeta tightened up. He was trembling, and facing away.

"Kakarot…?" Vegeta gazed up at him with concern.

"No photos… Please…" Goku said, barely above a whisper. His bangs shadowed his eyes, but Vegeta could tell he was upset.

Still, to be that nervous over having a photo taken of him, what could-

It took all of two seconds for Vegeta to realize it.

It's the videos that man took of him…!

Being recorded like that, it must have traumatized him…

He turned back to the man with the camera, approaching him. "Alright, you're going to delete those photos *right now* ."

"What? Why?" The man stuttered.

"Nobody gave you the right to start recording us." Vegeta growled.

"But Ms. Bulma said-" the man stepped back, scared.

"I don't *care* what she said." Vegeta snapped, interrupting him. "I'm telling you to *delete them* . If you don't, then I'll take your precious camera and smash it in the ground, that way you won't have *any* photos left."

"Okay, okay, I'll delete them! Just give me a moment." The cameraman panicked, his hands shaking as he fumbled around with the device.

"That's more like it." Vegeta didn't move from his spot however, wanting to see for himself that they were gone.

Goku's head was spinning. He needed to get away. "I'm going to get some water…"

"Hey, just hold on…!" Vegeta started to run after him, right as he started to walk off. When they returned to the main area of the party, he grabbed Goku's wrist. "Kakarot-"

"Don't touch me!" Goku pulled away. "I should have known that coming here was a bad idea."

Atticus was watching them from a distance, and due to everybody's attention being on Goku, it allowed him the chance to slip something into the glass of wine that Vegeta had been drinking from without anybody noticing.

"I get why you're upset, but just listen to me-" Vegeta moved closer, desperate to get him to calm down.

"No! I told you before, don't touch me!" Goku pushed him back. His eyes widened a bit when he realized what he had done, the hurt in Vegeta's eyes. "I…"

He averted his gaze. "I'm sorry… I… need to be alone right now."

As Goku walked off, Vegeta was left standing there in shock at what had just happened.

...Damn it, I was just worried about him… Is that wrong of me…? No, I shouldn't have grabbed him like that. I need to apologize.

Slowly, he returned to his initial seat, picking back up the cup of alcohol he had been drinking from earlier and downing the rest of the cup. He was just about to go after Goku when a hand touched his shoulder, causing him to jump.

"Lover's quarrel?"

"Atticus!" Vegeta exclaimed, startled. "What do you want?"

"You know what I want." Atticus said simply. *"I want you."*

Vegeta jumped, glaring off to the side. *"Not now. We're at a party."*

"I don't care. There's private rooms on this ship. They're just as good as anywhere else."

"But what if somebody-" Vegeta winced a bit, as Atticus brushed a hand across his back.

*" **Now** , Vegeta. Don't make me repeat myself. I still haven't forgotten what happened last night. So if you want to rectify that, you'd better come quietly. If you don't, well… I don't think I need to remind you."*

Those words destroyed Vegeta. Within seconds, he knew his only option.

Cooperate and endure.

Survive.

Without a single word, he followed behind him.

When they reached the private room, Atticus told him the same thing he often did. "Strip. And turn yourself to me on the bed."

His mind already shutting down, Vegeta wordlessly took off his vest and shirt, but stopped at his pants.

"Can't we do this later…? It's Kakarot, I need to go to him and make sure he's okay." Vegeta said.

"Don't you dare start that with me *again* . You can see him all you want after we're done here. Now hurry up…" Atticus kicked him down on the bed, towering over him.

Vegeta's eyes widened, his nerves catching up with him. Only then, did he find the strength to fight back just like the night before. Desperate to pull away. And maybe he would have it it weren't for the sudden spell of weakness he experienced. He was light headed and his body felt like it weighed more than ever, rendering him helpless.

Shit… What's going on…? I only had one drink… So why am I feeling this way?

"Now now, Vegeta, I thought we had an agreement. You're not allowed to back out now." In a split second, Atticus grabbed his body, forcing him onto his back and using ki rings to bind his wrists to the bed stand.

My body… Why can't I move? I feel so weak all of a sudden…

"You're probably wondering why you can't move, aren't you, Vegeta…?" Atticus smirked.

Vegeta's breath hitched. His vision was foggy. "Atticus, you bastard… What have you done to me…?"

"Haven't figured it out yet…? Remember the alcohol you were drinking a minute ago…? Well, while you were…" The sound of fabric ribbing could be heard, before a cold hand rested on Vegeta's chest. " *Arguing* with *him* , I took the time to slip in a little something extra for you."

"You *spiked* my *drink* …?" Vegeta glared at him furiously.

"That's right. I didn't want any chance of you trying to escape from me like last time." Atticus ran a hand down to his thighs, tearing apart the fabric there as well. "Besides… This kind of spruces things up a bit, don't you think? I can't wait to see the faces you'll make this time, when I fuck the shit out of you. It turns me on just *thinking* about it."

"Damn you…" Vegeta spat, weakly. "You're going to pay for this, I swear it…"

Atticus slapped his cheek. "And what is a little Saiyan like you gonna do about it, huh? I'm stronger than you are." Hands continued to rip the remaining clothing off of Vegeta's body. "I always *have* been."

"You'd be wise not to underestimate me, Atticus." Vegeta refused to cave. "Us saiyans are stronger than you know… I'm not about to let something like this break me."

You'd be wise not to underestimate me, Atticus. Us Saiyans are stronger than you know... I'm not about to let something like this break me.

"Keep telling yourself that." Atticus smirked, cupping his chin. "It makes the catch all the more interesting."

"Speaking of which…" Slowly, his hand trailed down to his necklace, catching Vegeta's eyes. "I've been wondering about something for a while now. You're not usually the type to wear jewelry. At least I've never seen you wear it before… So tell me… What is this…?"

"Don't touch that." Vegeta growled, his heart skipping a beat.

"Oh my. *Someone's* getting defensive." Atticus smirked, sensing his attachment to it. "Gift from your boyfriend, I presume…?"

His finger tugged at the necklace as he tilted his head in amused curiosity.

"I said don't touch that…!" Vegeta became desperate, the look in his eyes giving his weakness away. He hated it, because he knew Atticus would have probably left it alone if he hadn't had a reaction to it.

"I'm *right* , aren't I? How funny…" Atticus chuckled. "Just a moment ago, you said you weren't going to let me break you and now you're begging me not to touch your necklace? What's with the sudden change of heart, huh, prince?"

"It's nothing." Vegeta denied it. "Just go ahead and rape me already. It's what you brought me here for, isn't it? So do it."

Biting back tears, he glared at him, just wanting him to get it over with already. *Distract him. It's not like I'm going to have a choice in this anyways. So that's the least I can do. Just keep his focus on me. I can't let him break that.*

"Aww, but now you've went and got me all curious." Atticus coed. "Come on, I want to know why this little gem is so important to you. I know it can't be the money. From what I've heard your family here is loaded, so if it was simply a matter of cost, you'd have no issue with replacing it. Just admit it already. It's something personal to you, isn't it? From *him* …"

Another tug at the pendant, slightly more aggressive than the last.

"Atticus, please, don't." Vegeta repeated, quickly losing his composure.

"Back to saying 'please' already, are we?" Atticus purred. "Now, that's what I like to hear. Is you… *begging* me."

He was obviously enjoying himself. He had always loved pressing Vegeta's buttons, ever since he was a child. He would exploit *any* weakness he saw, and use it to his advantage.

A devilish grin formed on his face. He clutched the chain and pendant in his hand, making his plan obvious.

"Atticus, no…! You can do anything you want, just don't-" Vegeta couldn't even finish his sentence before the necklace was jerked off him breaking the chain. His eyes widened, his breath catching in his throat. He couldn't speak.

"Hey, Vegeta, I want you to have this."

"A necklace? There's no way I'm putting that thing on. Wear it yourself."

"Oh, come on, ya gotta try it on. I bought it just for you."

The necklace Goku had gotten him at the festival.

"I hope you know I'm going to take this off later."

One he had so callously blown off, not realizing Goku had spent all the money had on it.

"I just… wanted to get something nice for you, after everything you've done for me…"

A simple piece of jewelry, but one that represented the bond they shared.

"That necklace looks good on you. It matches with your eyes."

An amulet of hope.

Destroyed.

Right in front of him.

Atticus, having the reaction he wanted, tossed it aside. "Oh, Vegeta, you're so predictable. It's so adorable."

"Heh, you really are the *worst* , you know that…?" Tears. Something inside of Vegeta snapped in that moment. He had never felt more alone in his life.

"I'll take that as a compliment. You want to know why?" Atticus positioned Vegeta's body, which was almost entirely limp. He leaned in, whispering into his ear. "Because it means I *won* ."

RAPE SCENE AHEAD

In an instant, that all too familiar sharp pain shot up Vegeta's spine causing him to let out a shout, which was instantaneously muffled by the larger man's hand.

"Now now, Vegeta, be a good boy for me and keep quiet, or I'll have to gag you." Atticus warned, his eyes narrowing.

Vegeta felt like he was being ripped apart from the inside, and he could tell that it was intentional, probably because had attempted to defy him. He turned his head off to the side, biting his lip in a desperate attempt to stifle the pain. All he could do was sob, silently.

Seeing that Vegeta had submitted to him, Atticus moaned euphorically, thrusting into him. "Ah, yes… That's it. That's the expression I've been waiting for… Please… Cry for me more, Prince... The way you did back then. You know what I'm talking about, don't you? When I first took your virginity on Frieza's ship…"

Vegeta tensed up at the mention, sobbing even harder. The pain was unbearable.

"Ah, so you *do* …" Atticus's tone was mocking. "Man…, it feels like it was just yesterday. You looked so scared and helpless. Such a *crybaby* . Which is kind of funny, considering how much time you had spent insulting me before then. But you were so arrogant. I just couldn't *help* myself."

He opened Vegeta's mouth, sticking a few fingers inside to play around with the saliva.

"When somebody weaker than me decides to get mouthy towards me, there's something… rewarding… about putting them in their place. So seeing a stone cold *brat* like you… get reduced to *this* …? It's *arousing* ."

Irritated by the fingers prodding his mouth Vegeta bit down as hard as he could. A last ditched effort to defend himself.

Bad mistake.

Atticus winced, but the corners of his lips tugged upwards. "Now, see *that* ?"

Without any warning he slapped him, creating a scratch mark on his cheek.

"That's *exactly* what I'm talking about!" Another slap. "I *love* this! Thank you!"

And another.

"...You're disgusting." Vegeta glared off to the side.

"Hmph. I *know* I am…" Atticus leaned in, forcing him to face him again, so their noses were only apart. "But so are *you* ..."

Vegeta's eyes widened when Atticus's tongue forced itself into his mouth. He could hardly breathe. In all the time he had known Atticus, Atticus had never *once* kissed him. *This bastard. He's doing this just to mess with me .*

Damn him.

Even as a mix of pain and heat continued to envelope his body, his eyes started to close.

He was so tired, on the verge of slipping out of consciousness.

No…

He scolded himself.

I just have to wait a little longer…

This will all be over soon.

*It **has** to be.*

That hope was all he had left.

END RAPE SCENE

…

"Hey, Piccolo, have you seen Vegeta?" Goku found himself asking after he had had some time to cool down. "I can't find him. And I can't sense his energy, either. Where could he have gone…?"

Piccolo gazed up at him. "I think I saw him walk off with Atticus about twenty minutes ago. Why?"

"Wait, he's with *Atticus* ?" Goku's eyebrows furrowed. "But why?"

"I'm not sure. I only saw them from a distance. They didn't really say much, but Vegeta seemed kind of unnerved when he left." Piccolo said.

"No. This is bad." Goku's heart sank upon hearing that. "Answer me, can you tell me which direction they went?"

"As far as I could tell, headed that way, the door over there." Piccolo made a gesture with his finger.

When Goku saw it, he gasped, a pit forming in his stomach. "Over there? It *can't* be. That's where the private rooms are. Vegeta… He could be in danger right now…! I have to go to him…"

Without even thinking, and ignoring Piccolo's questioning, Goku ran off, his heart pounding in his chest.

Once again, the scratch marks he had seen covering Vegeta's body the night before flashed through his head. His tears. The panic he was in. His fear of Atticus this morning.

I shouldn't have left him.

I should have stayed with him.

This is all my fault.

No, maybe I'm wrong and it's nothing. Hopefully, he's safe. But I need to know for sure.

"Vegeta? Are you in here?" Goku slammed open door after door, breaking each lock in an heart beat to locate his partner. "Darn it, he's not here either…! Where could he be at…?"

He was just about to give up when he realized there was one other hallway he hadn't explored. One that somewhat isolated from the others.

He opened the door and went inside.

From the looks of it there were only a few rooms in here.

He took a step towards one of them, freezing up when he heard voices. The sound of heavy grunting and labored breathing. He recognized it as Atticus and Vegeta almost immediately.

"Say my name... I said SAY IT!"

"I won't…" Vegeta. He was crying.

"Wrong answer!" The sound of a smack. *"Try again. Tell me what you want… Who do you* ***belong*** *to, Vegeta…?"*

"...Kaka…rot…"

Another slap.

"If I hear you say his name one more time, I'll shove my cock so far down your throat you won't be able to breathe."

Upon hearing those words, Goku's eyes widened, his hands shaking. He almost couldn't process it.

Without even thinking, he busted in the door, rage like never before consuming him.

That's when he saw what was happening, every suspicion he had ever had confirmed and more.

Vegeta, naked on the bed, chained by ki rings, tears on his face. There was blood too.

Atticus was inside of him. Vegeta was being *raped* .

And from the looks of it, Atticus had already cummed in him at least once. The very sight of it sent him over the edge.

"Atticus, you bastard! Get off of him!" Goku roared, fury consuming him as he lunged at him.

It wasn't enough to hurt him but it did manage to separate Atticus from Vegeta.

Despite his rage, however, his first priority was getting to Vegeta.

"Vegeta! Hey, just hang on. I'm right here. Everything's going to be okay now. I'm getting you out of these." Goku powered up, trying to disrupt the ki rings with energy of his own, but it wasn't enough. They were impenetrable. "Nonono, damn it… It's not budging."

"Kakarot," Vegeta said weakly, tears in his eyes. "You need to get out of here. Please… I don't want him to hurt you too."

"No, I'm not leaving you here with him… I won't…" Goku vehemently shook his head. "You don't deserve this… I-"

"You stay out of this!" A hand grabbed him from behind, tossing him off the bed, before stroking Vegeta. "Vegeta is mine, Kakarot… Can't you tell? I've already claimed him."

"Claimed him…? You ***raped*** him! You'll **pay** for that!" Powering up, Goku stood back up, jumping on him.

His fist made contact with Atticus's face, but there was no reaction.

It didn't even phase him!

Goku pulled back with uncertainty.

"Oh, so you want to play *rough* , do you?" Atticus's eyes narrowed. "Well, normally, I would have just killed you for getting in my way, but I think I have a better idea. Get over here!"

Atticus grabbed his arm, pulling him down onto the bed next to Vegeta.

"What? Hey!" Goku shouted, struggling against his grip.

Unfortunately, Atticus quickly overpowered him easily, towering over him as he pinned him by his wrists. "Since Vegeta doesn't want to play with me anymore, I'll just have to take his boyfriend *instead* ."

A loud ripping noise could be heard as Atticus tore Goku's shirt in half.

Goku was stunned, his entire body freezing up in response.

Vegeta's eyes widened, his breath hitching. "No, don't touch him. Atticus, please, whatever you want, I'll do anything you ask. I'll even sing for you! Just please, don't hurt him." Vegeta choked out, cursing himself.

"Quiet. I'm playing with Kakarot now. You had your chance." Atticus fondled Goku's pecs in his hands, a lustful expression on his face.

Weakened by the drugs, Vegeta found himself helpless to watch as Atticus's hands began to wander over his lover's body.

This can't be happening…

Kakarot needs me yet, I'm just sitting here…

I have to protect him.

Move, dammit…

Tears of desperation fell down his cheeks. "Atticus, please… Don't do this… He has nothing to do with this."

This was just like before, when he thought Beerus was going to kill Bulma.

All he could do was plea.

"Liar!" Atticus snapped. "He has *everything* to do with this. After all… He's the reason you keep defying me, isn't he?"

He looked back down at Goku, who was looking up at him in fear.

"That's right. All of this is your fault! Your fault! Your fault! Your fault!" As he spat that, he hit Goku in the face over and over again, seeming content when he finally grunted in pain. "That being said…"

SEXUAL ASSAULT SCENE AHEAD

"The more I look at you… I think I can see why he's so obsessed with you. You do have quite the body." He moved his hand back down to Goku's pec, giving it a small squeeze. "In fact, you have larger assets than most women I know."

Leaning down, Atticus licked his nipple, before chomping down on it.

Goku let out a small whimper, trying to breathe as he felt a hand slipping down into his pants, stroking him. Flashback upon flashback flowed through his head, like it was happening all over again. His eyes widened, heat spreading through his groin.

"Vegeta…, I'm scared…" Goku looked over at his lover with desperate tears in his eyes. "What's he gonna do to me?"

Hearing that destroyed Vegeta. He once again tried to move but the effects of the drugs were too much to fight off.

"Atticus, you bastard…! Get your hands off of him…!" He shouted.

"My, someone seems jealous." Atticus teased with a glance. "But I wonder… Could it be that you've never done this stuff with him before…?

"I…" Vegeta had to pause. It caught him so heavily off guard that he wasn't even sure how to react.

"I thought as much." Atticus smirked. "You haven't, have you? Maybe that's why it bothers you so much. The idea of another man ravishing his body when you, his own partner, haven't even been able to yet. It must infuriate you."

"None of that matters to me… Kakarot's body is his own, so if he decides to share that with me one day, then that's *his* choice. But I will *not* be seen *forcing* it on him like you're doing right now, because I'm not some sick twisted pervert like *you* are…!"

" *Pervert* ?" Atticus bellowed. "Are you really going to tell me you've never imagined doing this to him *yourself* ? To have him under you like this, completely at your mercy and ravish his body? To mark him like canvas and claim him as yours? To cover his face in semen and make him swallow it? Or… to force him into submission, and make him beg you like a dog-"

"You're disgusting!" Vegeta shouted, unable to take it any longer. "Kakarot isn't some animal to me. He's a *person* . And you're just a monster, as you always were…"

Atticus smirked after a moment. "Well, I don't know about you, but there's a certain satisfaction in hearing the cries of agony of those I've taken. Why don't I show you what I mean…?"

Reaching further down into Goku's pants, he shoved several fingers inside of him without warning.

"Ahh…!" Goku cried out in pain.

Vegeta watched in horror as Goku turned his head towards him, closing his eyes, a tear falling down his cheek.

SEXUAL ASSAULT SCENE END

"Why… youUUUU…!" He let out an explosive roar, something inside of him snapping, his entire sense of reasoning gone.

Energy flowed around them, startling Atticus as the ki rings suddenly dispelled. The room and everything in it was destroyed in an instant, as well as the walls surrounding them.

Despite the drugs, despite being nearly unconscious, despite *everything* , Vegeta forced himself up out of sheer will power. "You're going to pay for that!"

Atticus didn't even have time to react before Vegeta's hand made contact with his throat.

Vegeta pushed Goku to the side, to separate them.

"Oh, so the Saiyan prince has some fight left in him after all. Well, let me just remind you… who you're… messing with!" Atticus kneed him in the stomach, knocking the wind out of him in the process. Vegeta coughed up blood due to how hard the blow was, but wiped it off of his mouth with a glare, refusing to let himself fall.

He was certain the impact had just broken one of his ribs.

No matter.

He growled, turning straight to blue and lunging at him again.

Atticus caught him by the wrist, sliding a foot underneath him.

As he fell, Vegeta kicked him in the face, dislodging a few of Atticus's teeth, before catching himself with his hands and flipping back in the air. Upon landing, he almost lost his footing due to still being drugged, which gave Atticus enough time to strike back, delivering a devastating blow to his left arm.

Crack.

Vegeta let out a shout of pain, and almost immediately after, he was sent flying, crashing through what little bit was left of the wall. Several women who were passing by to see what had happened screamed when they saw that he was naked.

"Not so strong without your left arm, *are* you, Vegeta!?" Atticus mocked.

"That's what *you* think…" Vegeta struggled to get up, clutching his arm. He gritted his teeth, cursing himself for not being on better guard.

He spat out some more blood, before using his right hand to hurl energy blast after energy blast at him.

"Vegeta?!" Bulma's voice caught his attention. "What's going on? And why are you naked?! Put some clothes on!!"

"Stay out of this!" Vegeta snapped, ignoring her.

Unfortunately, that little distraction was enough to cost him an opportunity for Atticus to sock him in the face.

Before he could even get back up, Atticus was already above him, slamming his foot into his gut. "You're not going anywhere. I'm not through with you yet."

Another roar of agony could be heard as he grinded his foot into Vegeta's rib cage.

"Aww… I'm sorry, am I hurting you? You know this all could have been avoided if you had just cooperated. But no, you just had to go and make me angry, didn't you?"

" *Bite me* ." Vegeta spat.

Atticus kicked him in the face. "Care to repeat that?"

"I said ***bite me*** ." Vegeta glared.

Atticus picked him by his throat. "You have quite the tongue on you, Saiyan, but as always, you have nothing to back it up. Such a disappointment. Then again… There is still your body… now that's another matter."

As he said that, he traced his hand down Vegeta's thigh. "I'd prefer not to have to kill you if I could help it. So what do you say we put this little feud behind us and forget this ever happened, huh?"

"What? So you can just go back to raping me again? I'd rather *die* than be some pawn in your twisted game, Atticus." Vegeta had reached his limit.

"Raping? You really like tossing around that word a lot, don't you?" Atticus growled. "Yet that's never stopped you from cumming every time I fuck you. I don't know why you keep up this farce. You obviously enjoy it, just like you did back then."

"I was a *child* back then..." Vegeta strained to talk, reaching up scraping at Atticus's arm.

"A 'child' who committed genocide, just like the rest of us." Atticus mocked. "You're no victim, so stop pretending to be! If anything, you *deserve* this!"

"Tch, like *you're* anybody to talk. You've butchered *countless* innocents, and even *bragged* about it. You're a *hypocrite* , Atticus, so stop lecturing *me* on *semantics* !" Kicking Atticus in the stomach as hard as he could have, he caused him to break his grip, jumping
back.

In the process of landing, Vegeta almost tripped on a damaged plank, but Goku caught him before he could fall.

Piccolo and the others had gathered, but outside of Bulma, nobody had really said much.

"Are you okay?" Goku asked, worried.

"Yeah, I'll be fine…" Vegeta weakly stood back up.

"You sure? You don't look so well." Goku said with concern.

"I said I'm fine. Don't worry about it. I-Get back!" Vegeta slammed into Goku just in time to save him from being hit by one of Atticus's energy blasts.

"Thanks, Vegeta." Goku said, with a smile.

"Don't mention it." Vegeta grunted. "Just get somewhere safe. I'll handle this."

"Got it." Goku ran off a bit.

Vegeta then turned his attention back to Atticus once again. "Aiming for my partner now, Atticus? Really?"

"What can I say? The way you're always pampering him is just too adorable, I couldn't stop myself from wondering… What expression would you make if you had to watch your lover die right in front of you?"

Vegeta's blood boiled with fury. "You really love to piss me off, don't you? Well, *screw* this. I'm *done* letting you walk all over me!"

In a matter of a split second, his fist collided with Atticus's face, sending him flying. But he didn't stop there.

With both his hands, in spite of the damage that had been done to his left arm, he began hurting balls of energy his way, one after another.

With each blast he became angrier than the next, as everything he had kept bottled inside for years rose to the surface, finally spilling out.

And not just the suffering that he himself had endured at the hands of this man, but Goku as well and what he had suffered because of people *like* him.

The nightmares. The starvation. The purging. The cuts.

All of it came back to him in that moment.

The very fact that Atticus even *dared* to lay a hand on Goku was more than he could handle.

He wanted nothing more than to see this man dead.

Atticus quickly lost his ground when Vegeta began to barrage him with blow after blow. Some he managed to block and others he didn't.

Goku watched him with fascination awestruck as always.

Vegeta… He's gotten stronger… I can feel it. This happened before, back when Bulma got slapped by Lord Beerus… Is it because of me…?

One final blast was enough to knock Atticus on his back.

Vegeta immediately took the opportunity to fly into the air, gathering more energy into his palms. "Final Fla-"

"Vegeta, no! DON'T!" Goku shouted, stopping him in his tracks. "If you blast him now, you'll bring down the whole ship and all the people on it!"

"Damn it…" Vegeta cursed, seeing that Atticus was already getting back up. "Then use your instant transmission and get them out of here! Because I'm not leaving until I've finished him off!"

In that moment, he no longer felt fear of this man, he was filled with nothing but loathing, the desire to kill.

Goku knew he wasn't going to stop, so he decided his only choice was to comply. He turned to the others. "All of you, listen to me! I want you to help me gather everybody on this ship to a specific spot. I'm going to teleport all of them to a safer location."

"On it." Piccolo seemed to have at least some clue as to what was going on, and he could tell it was serious.

It seemed that everybody was in collective agreement on wanting to help especially after seeing the interaction between Atticus and Vegeta.

Bulma especially was horrified, knowing now what had been done to Vegeta, the reason he was naked. She wanted to say something but it was so hard to process and she knew there wasn't any

time right now. It frustrated her.

Wiping away her tears she followed after the others, determined to help in whatever way she could.

In the meantime, Vegeta managed to hold Atticus off by exchanging blows with him. He couldn't go all out while there were still people around. As much as he hated to admit it, it would weigh on his conscience.

Everybody made quick work of moving to the otherside of the ship and about 15 minutes later, they were ready to go.

"Is that everybody?" Goku asked.

"Yes, I believe so." Piccolo confirmed.

"Good." Goku then looked up at them, holding his hand. "Listen, I need all of you connected to me somehow. It doesn't matter if you're touching somebody's hand or touching their shoulder, but make sure you're touching *somebody* .

His explanation was a little strange but everybody understood. The crowd made no haste in doing as told, afterwhich Goku touched his forehead and latched on to the first spirit energy he could think of, which ended up being Krillin's.

Using his instant transmission to teleport, he and the crowd appeared before Krillin who was in a store.

"Goku?!" Krillin jumped.

"Yeah, sorry, Krillin. I needed somebody's energy to latch onto and you were the first person I thought of. You mind taking care of this? I'm sure Bulma can help you out."

"Uh, sure, I guess I can. But what's going on?" Krillin seemed frazzled.

"No time, I'll explain everything later." Goku said. "I've got to go back to Vegeta."

Piccolo grabbed his shoulder. "You're not actually planning to return, *are* you?"

"Hey, that's not true." Goku lied.

"Please, you can't lie to me." Piccolo smirked a bit. "It's written all over your face."

"...That obvious, huh…?" Goku gave in, his expression saying so much more than words ever could. He wanted to be done with this and go back home. Hold Vegeta in his arms and reassure him that everything would be okay.

"Well, I think most of us have an idea of what happened, so go on. We'll take it from here." Piccolo said.

"I really appreciate it." Goku murmured.

"Wait, before you go, give these to Vegeta, will you?" Bulma held out some clothes. They were casual, khakis, boxers, and a black tank top, but they were better than nothing. "I was going to give them to him before but now's a better time than any I guess.

"Oh, thanks. I'll be sure to do that." Goku said.

"Goku? Take care of yourself, okay?" Krillin smiled softly.

"And keep us updated." Chichi added. Trunks and Goten were talking amongst themselves about what had been going on. They would have got involved, but Bulma and Chichi had been pretty clear about making them help out with the people on the ship.

"Right." With that decided, Goku teleported back to Vegeta.

When he returned, the ship was on fire and it was already in the process of sinking. That split time away had been enough to give Vegeta the advantage.

"Don't do this. Vegeta, please-" Atticus was at Vegeta's feet now, begging for mercy.

"Shut up!" Vegeta spat, holding out his hand and gathering up the energy to finish him off. "How dare you? All those times I begged you to stop and you never *once* listened to me. And then you turned around and pulled the same thing with *him.* And now you expect me to show sympathy to *you* ?"

"Vegeta, please, I'm sorry. I'll never do it again! Please, Don't kill me! I don't want to die!" Atticus begged.

Vegeta glared coldly. "I'll see you in hell, Atticus."

Finishing him off, he dropped to his knees, his shoulders shaking.

It was as if a weight had suddenly been lifted from his shoulders.

And yet… that feeling passed almost as soon as it came.

He just sat there, a stifled sob escaping his lips, as he remembered the sight of Goku being touched, the fear filled expression on his face, his whimper, and then his shout of pain.

I wasn't able to stop it in time.

He got assaulted again.

Just like at the festival.

He had sworn to himself that he would never allow anything like that to happen again.

I failed him .

"Vegeta… Here… Put these on. Bulma asked me to give them to you." Goku's voice interrupted his thoughts, as he placed a pair of clothes in front of him.

Much to Goku's chagrin, Vegeta didn't move.

Vegeta refused to go look at him, self-disgust plaguing him. Goku knew what had happened. He knew *everything* .

How could he even look at me after everything that's happened? After he saw me like that… I feel so humiliated right now…

"Oh, right, your arm was hurt. Here, let me help you." Goku kneeled down, picking up the shirt and carefully working Vegeta's hands through the arm holes. Slowly, he got the shirt over his head, then wrapped an arm around his waist to lift him. "We need to get your underwear and pants on now. Can you stand up for me…?"

"Just leave me here." Vegeta refused.

"What? Don't be silly. Come on." Goku urged him up. After a moment, Vegeta stood, clinging to Goku's shirt for support.

"Lift your foot up." Goku eased him into the process, slipping his underwear on for him, and then his pants.

The side effects of the drug and his injuries had caught back up with him, causing him to sway. He almost fell, but Goku's hold on him remained secure.

"Now where's your boots at?" Goku asked.

"...They're over there." Vegeta weakly pointed to his right.

The boots were surrounded by flames but seemed intact.

"Here, I'm gonna pick you up, okay? Try to bear with me." Goku pulled him into his arms, carrying him over and grabbing them.

The sudden shift in movement hurt because of his broken ribs, but, outside of small hiss of pain, Vegeta endured it.

"Everything's gonna all right now." Goku assured him gently. "I'm taking you back home and then we're gonna get you a senzu bean. Just stay with me."

"Wait…" That's when Vegeta remembered the necklace.

He looked around, trying to see if he could find it. Water was starting to build up around them. The ship was sinking.

"What is it?" Goku asked.

"I have to find it…" Vegeta choked out, trying to escape his arms.

"Hey, don't anywhere. Find what? What'cha lookin' for?" Goku asked, patiently.

"The necklace…" Vegeta replied, in a strained voice. "The one you gave me…"

That's what he's so worked up about? Goku was a bit surprised at first. "It's okay, I'll get you another one. Come on…"

"No… You spent all of your money on it. I can't leave without it." Vegeta tried to pull away again.

"Vegeta, listen to me. There's water all around us and the ship is sinking. That necklace is probably long gone by now." Goku said. "And you look like you're about to pass out. If you go down there, you're liable to drown."

"Yeah, but-"

"Shh…" Goku soothed. "Just save your energy for me. We'll talk when we get home, okay?"

Securing his hold on Vegeta, He flew into the sky.

Vegeta wanted to protest further, but Goku didn't seem to be having it, so eventually, he rested his face against his chest.

Kakarot's scent. He smells so good…

It was at that moment that he started to black out, the last memory he had being of melting into the other man's warmth.

….

Hours later Vegeta woke up on their bed after ingesting a senzu bean that Goku had just given him.

"Kakarot…" He murmured.

"Hey… Glad to see you're awake again… How are you feeling?" Goku asked.

Vegeta immediately turned away, shame consuming him, knowing Goku had seen him like that. "How can you even look at me right now…? I betrayed you… Aren't you going to leave me…?"

"Of course not… You didn't betray me, Vegeta… You were raped..." Goku spoke gently, but firmly enough to make his stance on this clear.

"I *cummed* to him… even though I tried so hard *not* to." Vegeta slurred, cursing himself for his weakness. His shoulders were shaking. "I feel disgusting right now…"

"Hey, that wasn't your fault… Don't talk like that…" Goku caressed his cheek. "Look at me…"

Slowly, Vegeta met his gaze, tears streaming the side of his face.

"You can't always control how your body responds to stuff like that…" Goku said. " *You're* the one who told me that, remember? Back when I was worried about the same thing… Mine reacted *too* when he touched me, and *I* was *terrified* ."

Vegeta stared at him, shifting over in the bed so he could melt into Goku's touch.

"I'm sorry…" He then reached up and grabbed Goku's hand. "You got assaulted because of me… I never meant for you to get caught up in all of that..."

"Don't apologize." Goku murmured. "It's my fault he lured you off in the first place. I shouldn't have left you there…"

"You didn't know that would happen…" Vegeta replied.

"Maybe not, but still… I just wish I had gotten to you sooner… But I was too late, and he…" Goku's voice became uneven as the image of Atticus inside of Vegeta once again flashed through his head, and then the cum. "I should have been *stronger* …! So that way I could have protected you. 'Yet instead, you ended up having to save me instead, even though it should have been the other way around…"

"Kakarot..." Vegeta's heart clenched at hearing the crack in Goku's voice. "Please…"

Reaching up weakly, he wiped the tears from Goku's face. "Don't beat yourself up over that. You did everything you could have… and *more* . Getting the people off of the ship, and bringing them to safety while I focused on nothing but destruction… You're such a good person… I almost killed Bulma in that blast, but you stopped me… For that, I'm nothing but grateful to you. For saving her. And them."

Vegeta's eyes caught sight of the bite mark wound on Goku's chest. He ran a hand over it, with a painful expression. "I'm just glad… That he didn't… go any further with you…. If he had, then… I wouldn't have been able to forgive myself… I *still* can't… He *touched* you and for the longest time, all I could do was *watch* . But… When I heard you shout, and I saw the tears in your eyes, I knew what he had done."

His hand traveled down, stopping with a saddened and helpless expression at his v-line. The touch was intimate. "He *fingered* you, didn't he…? That's why you were in so much pain…"

Vegeta couldn't have seen it for his pants, but it was pretty easy to assume.

The smallest of nods. Goku looked ashamed. And vulnerable even saying it.

"I'm sorry…" Vegeta murmured. "That must have triggered some bad memories for you… Are you alright…?"

"Well…, it's certainly nothing compared to what you went through, so-" Goku started to say.

"That's not what I'm asking." Vegeta cut him off. "I'm asking about *you* , not me."

"...Well, I guess… It *was* a little scary." Goku admitted, with uncertainty. "He stuck three fingers inside of me at once, so it really startled me. But… it's not like he raped me, right…?"

Should I really feel that torn up over it? Vegeta went through way worse.

"Kakarot, it doesn't matter how far he went. What he did to you was wrong." Vegeta took his hand into his own, admiring the soft skin, even as he intertwined their fingers. "That damned bastard. He couldn't stop at just me. He had to go after *you* as well. I swear I'd kill him again if I could…"

An uncomfortable silence settled between them as Goku considered his words. "Hey, Vegeta? There's… something I need to ask you…. and I understand if you don't want to talk about it, but it's something important to me…"

There was no response, but Goku knew he was listening.

"How many times… has he done that to you?" He forced himself to ask the question. "Raped you, I mean…?"

"...don't know." Vegeta replied, almost evasively.

"Tell me the truth, Vegeta." Goku pressed it again. "I saw the bruises, the ones on your thighs. And the others too, so I can tell. He's done this to you multiple times, hasn't he?"

"...Yes." Vegeta admitted.

"How many…?" Goku urged.

"I told you I don't know…" Vegeta trembled. "It's just… Too many times, ever since I was a child… I couldn't keep up with it. I'm sorry… Please don't be angry at me for that."

A sob escaped his lips as he hid his face against Goku's chest, hugging tightly against his body, desperate for security.

Okay, maybe Goku should have expected that answer, since, granted, even his own question *had* been a little vague.

"Don't apologize, I'm not mad at you…" Goku ran a few fingers through his hair. His intentions hadn't been to upset him. "Actually, I probably should have worded that a little better. What I meant to ask was… how many times since he first arrived here on earth… Can you tell me that…?"

"..." Several sobs escaped Vegeta's lips. He was still under the influence of drugs but even in this state of mind, he didn't want to tell him that. Goku would leave him for sure.

"Vegeta, look at me…" Goku urged, cupping his cheek.

"No." Vegeta refused. "You'll blame me, just like the rest of them."

"The rest of who…? You're not making any sense." Goku said softly.

"...The Frieza force. They mocked me for it." He wasn't making much sense, and he was extremely emotional right now, but Goku could tell it was the drug that was partially responsible since he also sounded exhausted and kept slurring his speech.

"Well, I'm not going to mock you for it. But I want you to tell me everything you can. How many times… did he rape you while I was around, Vegeta?" Goku refused to back down on this.

"...While… you were in the hospital… or after…?" Vegeta inquired.

"Both… actually…" Goku pressed.

"Before… It was…" A long pause as Vegeta tried to think. "about thirteen or fourteen times, I think… Afterwards… it was… maybe twenty four… or was it… twenty twenty five…"

"Twenty five times… But that's… *How* ?" Goku tried his best to process it. Bruises had continued to appear on Vegeta's body a lot, always in the same places, which Vegeta kept saying it was from training, but in all that time, Goku had never actually seen Vegeta go off with Atticus. So the only other possibility was…

The image from the night before loomed in his mind as it had so many times before that day, a sick realization passed over him. "Vegeta…, tell me, when did he do these things to you…?"

"..."

"Answer me, please…" Goku demanded, gently, but wanting an explanation more than anything.

"It happened… while you were asleep." The words sent a cold chill down Goku's spine, confirming his conclusion.

He… raped him…. while I was sleeping??? No, this can't be… How could something like this happen without me noticing it?

I know I'm not the lightest sleeper, but still…

Could it be the medication…? It knocks me out so I often don't hear things… Maybe that's why I never found out about…

"He'd… often bring me to the gravity chamber and do it to me there. He said I was too noisy, so he wanted to…" Another sob escaped Vegeta's lips as he broke into tears, clutching at the fabric of Goku's pants leg. "shut me down…"

Goku's breath hitched, his heart skipping a bit. "So then… the reason you've been drinking so much lately… Is that… because of him as well? Like the night that I came home… You collapsed on the floor… You seemed afraid of something… You wouldn't even let me touch you at first…"

"...He told me… if I fought back or disobeyed him, then…" Vegeta trailed off for a moment, trying to regulate his emotions. "he'd do the same thing to you. It scared me, and he was stronger than I was, so I did what he asked. I didn't want him to hurt you."

"I know…" All Goku could feel in that moment was guilt.

How could I have let this happen to him?

All those times, he was being raped and abused, and I just stood by, trying to tell myself that maybe it was nothing after all, that maybe I was just being paranoid. A part of me didn't even want to believe it.

If only I had done something… I'm such an idiot!

I'm so sorry…

"He said he'd tell you that I was cheating on you because I cummed, but I wasn't…, I would never do that to you, I swear… I-" Vegeta looked up at him with desperation.

"Shh, it's okay…" He pulled him into a hug, pressing his lips to Vegeta's forehead. "I know You wouldn't… You're loyal…"

Vegeta buried his face against his chest, clawing at his skin. "The only person I want is *you* , Kakarot, Nobody else... Nobody else makes me feel things the way you do…"

"Well, I'm not going anywhere…" Goku kissed his neck.

"A dick doesn't get hard unless you're aroused. Admit it… You want me."

"I wouldn't cheat on you… I *wouldn't..."* Vegeta repeated the same thing again, almost as if to convince *himself.* "I swear… I even tried to *stop* him, but… I wasn't strong enough and my body… it-"

"Shh… None of that was your fault… We've talked about this… You were hurting. You asked him to stop and he ignored you. Forced you into it anyways. Even threatened you. That's rape, Vegeta… it doesn't matter how your body reacted. It's obvious that you didn't want that… If anything, I'm the one who should feel *guilty* right now…"

"You…?" Vegeta replied, drowsily amidst his crying. "Why?"

"Because… All that time, you were trying to protect me, even at the cost of giving up your own body. The signs… everything, it was all there… Right in front of me… but I wanted to believe you were okay. So when you said it was from training, I-I just feel so awful right now… I should have been there for you… but I wasn't… I failed you, when you needed me the most… I'm so sorry…"

As his voice cracked and he broke down in tears, he held Vegeta in a protective hug, cursing himself again and again, for not having done more, for lying to himself.

Apologizing over and over again in nonsensical ramblings.

"Kakarot… No, please… Don't blame yourself…" Slightly delirious, Vegeta became panicked by Goku's mood shift, slipping his arms up out of the larger man's grip so he could touch his face and wipe his tears away. "This is all my fault. I pushed you away, and even *lied* to you, because I didn't want you getting involved… There's no *way* you could have known."

"...I promise I'll get stronger, I'll even start training again, so that way… That way I'll be able to protect you the next time something like this happens. I swear…" Goku choked out, like he hadn't even heard him.

"Kakarot, that's not necessary." Vegeta held him tightly.

"For me, it *is* . I tried to fight him, Vegeta, but I was too *weak* ." Goku said with frustration. "And, when he grabbed me like that, I couldn't even defend *myself* , let alone another *person*... I can't forgive myself for that. That's why… I have to… No matter what…"

Vegeta was quiet for a long time before he started playing around with the strands of hair in Goku's bangs. "...Often… When he… raped me… he would make me sing for him…" Vegeta lowered his head, refusing to look at him. It may have seemed like it came out of nowhere, but it was obviously something deeply personal to him. "That's why… when you asked me to sing for you…"

"It scared ya…?" Goku assumed.

"Mn." Barely a response.

"I'm sorry…" Goku ran some fingers through his hair. "I had no idea that that was why… I just thought you were embarrassed about it… I can't believe somebody would do that to you. If… If I've ever made you uncomfortable by asking you to sing, then-"

"It's fine, really. There's nobody I've ever wanted to sing to more than you… Mainly... because you're a Saiyan, just like I am… And the song that I sang to you before… It comes from our homeword… where we were born."

"I was wondering about that… I knew I recognized it somehow, but I couldn't place where it was from… I just knew it was in our language…" Goku reflected on it.

"Sometimes…" There was a down cast, yet fond expression in his eyes as he spoke. "Saiyan parents would sing it to their babies when they were in the incubators. My mother sang it to me, so I'm sure yours did as well at some point."

"What does the song mean?" Goku asked.

"...It's a song about strength." Vegeta answered after a moment. "I can't translate it word for word because of how different the language is… But… It basically says… that even the strongest may rise and fall, but true strength is pressing forward, despite the odds and finding a way to endure no matter what hardship one may face. It's survival, Kakarot… And we've survived."

"Huh…" Goku thought it over, before kissing the top of his head in a protective embrace. "We really have… haven't we…? Especially you…"

"You did as well." Vegeta kissed his neck. "I'm proud of you."

"I'm proud of you too, Vegeta…" Goku pulled him even closer, tighter than he ever had before, his heart clenching when the other man's shoulders started trembling.

Hearing those words, they had meant more to Vegeta than Goku could have ever known.

…

In the end, Vegeta fell asleep again, because he was still exhausted due to the side effects of the drugs.

With a final glance, Goku left the room, heading down the hall to the room where Atticus had been staying.

The first thing he noticed upon entering was the stench.

What is that? It smells like something rotting in here.. .

Looking around for a possible source, that's when he saw it, piles of dried vomit which had never been cleaned up.

Ugh… That's disgusting…

Goku wasn't the most sanitary person, but even he had standards. Opening up the window, he headed to the storage room, grabbing some cleaning supplies.

First, he made sure to clean up all the trash off the floor, sweeping everything else up around it and throwing it into the trash bag. He then picked up the mop and dunked it in the water.

Afterwards, he sloshed it around on the floor. It had hardened onto the linoleum so he had to work with it some, but, bit by bit, he soon had it up.

He headed to the bathroom, picking up one of the towels that he could soak up the water with. Goku made sure everything was clean and dry before wiping sweat off of his brow and returning to the room with some air freshener.

He started to spray it around, coming to a halt when he suddenly felt something fly past him. The sound of a small crashing noise could be heard against the wall behind him. He turned around to see what it was.

His eyes widened with curiosity when he saw a lone bird sitting on the floor.

It's a cockatiel…!

Closing the window, Goku reapproached the bird. Kneeling down in front of it, he started to reach out towards it, a bit nervous when the bird screeched defensively.

"Hey, it's okay, I'm not gonna hurt you." He tried again, slower this time.

The cockatiel screeched again, but it didn't seem to protest too much after Goku picked it up in his hands. Maybe it already had an owner. That would make sense, considering the little leg band.

It was just scared.

Holding it to his chest, he emptied out a cardboard box from one of the other rooms, putting the cockatiel inside of it and closing the top.

I should probably get some food for it. I'll have to go down to the store though.

I'm sure Vegeta won't mind it if I borrow his card for this…

…

Goku flew back to the store that Vegeta had brought him to before, grabbing a small bag of seed and millet.

Once he got back, he set the bird up with a small container of food and another one of water.

"You want some millet?" Goku held out one of the strips for it.

Slowly, the bird approached it, taking a hesitant bite of it. After a few seconds, it became more bold, chomping away at it. "Yeah, that's good, ain't it?"

"What are you doing…?" A voice asked, startling him. Hot breath hit the nape of his neck.

"Eep! Vegeta! Don't startle me like that!" Goku snapped, looking over his shoulder. "It's um… a cockatiel… It flew in earlier, so I went and got some food. Hope you didn't mind me using your card for this…"

"Not as long as you returned it…" Vegeta said casually, before looking at his face. "Don't tell me…"

"Uh… Maybe? Hold on." Goku patted himself down, nervously. "Where could I have put it…?"

"Let me guess, you lost it, didn't you…?" Vegeta folded his arms.

"No…" Goku denied. "Well, I know I had it when I left the store… Maybe I can retrace my steps or something, I did fly here."

"Just forget about it…" Vegeta sighed.

"But-"

"Look, I'll just have Bulma cancel it, so she can have us issued a new one. But in the future. Let *me* handle the cards. You got that?"

"Okay… But earlier, you were asleep, and I didn't want to wake you up…" Goku lowered his head.

"Well, if it was an emergency like this, I wouldn't have minded." Vegeta said. "In any case, I think it's probably best if we report this. Judging by the leg band, I'm guessing it already has an owner somewhere who's looking for it."

"Okay, but…" Goku said. "Vegeta…? I was… wondering… If nobody claims it… Could we… maybe keep it…?"

"What? Surely, you're joking, right?" Vegeta scoffed.

"Come on, please?" Goku begged. "Just look at him. He's adorable!"

"He's an *animal* , Kakarot. And animals require a lot of attention." Vegeta pointed out, remaining as stubborn as ever.

"I know that!" Goku argued. "I'll take really good care of him, I promise. Pretty please?"

"Tch… And what are we supposed to do when we have to go to Lord Beerus's world? We can't just leave him here!"

"Then we'll just take him with us!" Goku proposed.

Vegeta gawked at him. But the hopeful expression on Goku's face was more than enough to win him over. "Mn… Ugh… *Fine* , but for now we wait. We won't know anything for sure until later. But I guess he is… kinda cute…"

His cheeks tinged pink as he said that. He turned his head away.

"Hey, you should try petting him." Goku urged.

"He won't bite me, will he?" Vegeta asked with uncertainty.

"No, I don't think so. He let me hold him earlier." Goku said.

"If… you're sure about it." Nervously, Vegeta reached inside of the box towards him, but immediately jumped back, clinging to Goku when the bird screeched at him.

"You liar! You said he wouldn't bite!" Vegeta growled.

"He won't, I swear! He just… likes to hiss some." Goku fidgeted with his fingers a bit. "But he's not aggressive, I promise."

"Of course you'd say that…" Vegeta didn't trust it one bit.

"You know… He kinda reminds me of *you* a little." Goku snickered.

"What's that supposed to mean?!" Vegeta demanded.

"Nothing~" Goku chirped, closing the box lid again. "I'm gonna go and put this bird seed up in the cabinet."

He gave a small grin when he heard Vegeta grumbling something under his breath before separating from him and saying he was going to make some phone calls.

…

Unsurprisingly, Vegeta ended up being the one who made sure the bird was fed and taken care of, because Goku wasn't trustworthy to follow up on stuff like that, although he did spend time with it.

By the next week, not only had they still not received a response about the bird, but the situation with Atticus still hadn't been discussed any further. Vegeta appeared to be avoiding it, so Goku let him be.

On the other hand, Vegeta had been drinking more, as if it was a means of forgetting for him, which made it impossible to ignore entirely. And yet, even then, Goku didn't say too much about it, not really sure how to broach the subject. He didn't want to be overbearing about it. After all, down deep, he knew that Vegeta needed space right now.

…

"You got me a new necklace?" Vegeta was stunned as he stared at it. The pendant was gorgeous.

"Yeah," Goku confirmed, sheepishly scratching his cheek. "I had to find the material to forge it, and it's not the exact same one as before, but I felt kinda bad about how worked up you got when he broke it and you couldn't find it. I hadn't realized it was that important to you."

"Well, of course it was important, you idiot. You're the one who got it for me." Vegeta held it up to his chest. "But you said you *made* this one, right?"

"Kinda?" Goku replied. "Bulma helped me a little with figuring out to make a hole for the chain, though. It's probably not as good as the original, but-"

"No. Don't worry. It's perfect. The fact that you worked on it yourself makes this one even more special to me. Thank you." Vegeta hugged him.

"It's no problem, really." Goku blushed a bit, returning it. "Also… I was kinda wondering if I could train with you…"

"What? *Right now* ?" Vegeta pulled back in shock.

"Yeah." Goku nodded. "Can we?"

Vegeta paused for a moment. "Um… I don't mind, but are you… really sure about this?"

"Uh-huh… I've been thinkin about it for a while now… And I decided I wanna get stronger. So I can help you… In case something like that happens again. I know I'm weaker than I used to be, so I probably won't be much of a challenge right now, but-"

"It's alright…" Vegeta didn't even need him to finish the sentence to know what he was going to say. "You're strong, so I know you'll catch up to me in no time at all. And then we'll continue our little game, as we always do. What do you say? Shall we bet on it?"

Their lips met.

"You're on." Goku smiled into the kiss. "Let's go to the gravity chamber. We can train there."

"Gravity chamber… Right, sure… I'll be out in a moment." Vegeta said shakily as Goku pulled away and headed down stairs to go outside.

Gravity chamber.

Gravity chamber.

Gravity chamber.

His head was spinning into a thousand different directions.

I haven't been back there since…

Clutching at his chest, he scolded himself.

No.

He's gone now.

He can't hurt me.

But what if somebody brings him back?

No. No. ***No*** *. Don't* ***think*** *that way.*

Just ***breathe*** *.*

I'll be fine.

…

"Hey." Goku beamed as Vegeta came outside. He ran over, grabbing his hand. "Come on."

"I'm coming, don't pull me." Unfortunately, despite trying to tell himself he would be fine, Vegeta lost his nerve right before he stepped in the gravity chamber. "Wait."

"What's wrong?" Goku asked.

"I can't… I can't go in there… Let's do this somewhere else." Vegeta pulled back.

"What? Why? Vegeta, what's gotten into you all of a sudden?" Goku asked, confused.

"It's… what he did to me in there… I refuse to relive that." Vegeta muttered, his grip on Goku's hand tightening. His other hand was covering his mouth as if he was trying to keep himself from throwing up.

Goku's breath hitched when he realized what Vegeta was talking about.

"...I'm sorry, I didn't think about that. It's okay. We don't have to go in there if you don't want to. We'll go wherever you want." Goku said, brushing a hand over his shoulder and kissing the top of his head.

…

The two found a remote location about 15 miles down the road. It was the perfect location because there weren't any people or houses around.

"Hey, I wanna kiss before we do this." Goku said.

"We kissed earlier." Vegeta argued.

"I know but still. I want one *now* ." Goku grumbled.

"You'll get your kiss later." Vegeta blushed, looking away. "But only *if* you can manage to lay a single blow on me."

"Meanie." Goku pouted, before skeptically adding, "You promise?"

"Yes, I *promise* ." Vegeta's cheeks turned even redder. "There, are you happy now?"

"Okay, but you'd better not complain later when I steal one from you." Goku replied with mischief.

"Threatening me, are you? I'd like to see you try." Vegeta said, meeting his eyes again, his lips curling upwards.

"Hey, I know I'm weaker now, but I don't want you holding back on me, you got that?" Goku prepared himself.

It's true he was nervous. But he had to keep moving forward, one step at a time.

And, after over a year, he felt he was finally ready to take this challenge head on again, as scary as it may be.

"I wouldn't dream of it." Vegeta said, taking his own stance with a smirk. "Prepare yourself, Kakarot."

"I'm ready whenever you are, Vegeta." Goku taunted.

"Oh, is that so." Vegeta's lips curled upwards even further. "Well then, it would be quite rude of me to keep you waiting!"

With excitement like never before, the two saiyans advanced towards one another, their fists colliding in an explosive impact that caused the ground around them to shake.

Due to a burst of energy radiating from the impact, a crater opened underneath their feet.

It had finally begun.

…

Goku and Vegeta trained until nightfall. Unsurprisingly, Goku had lost, but he had put up much more of a challenge than Vegeta had originally anticipated. They were both heavily injured.

"So…" Goku was out of breath, he was sitting on the ground next to him. "How'd I do?"

"You did fine. I guess…" Vegeta mumbled.

" *Hehe*... I get to have my kiss now, right?" Goku asked, eagerly.

"Yes…" Vegeta's response was barely above a whisper, before urging Goku towards him.

Goku crawled over, pressing their lips together with a contented smile.

He couldn't help it. Kissing Vegeta was addictive to him for some reason.

…

That evening, Vegeta had finally caved and decided to buy a cage for the cockatiel. It wasn't all that big, but it would suffice.

"There. That should be good, right?" Goku smiled after they had finished setting it up. The bird was now inside, and they had fresh seed and water in the feeding trays. The bird was chomping on some millet that had been placed inside the cage.

"Yeah, at the very least, it's certainly better than having him stuck in a cardboard box all the time. I'm sure he's happier too." Vegeta said simply.

"It sure looks that way, doesn't it?" Goku pondered it. "You think we should get another bird? It seems like it would get lonely being without a partner, don't you think?"

"Probably. But we'll figure it out another day. For right now. I'm going to get a shower. I'm exhausted." Vegeta said as he left the room.

"Kay, I'll go get dinner ready." Goku said, turning off the light and heading downstairs.

…

Twenty minutes later, Goku had finished up, having chosen to make stew again.

When Vegeta returned to the kitchen, the first he did upon entering was head to the fridge and grab a bottle of booze.

Goku noticed it, but didn't comment.

"You made beef stew again? It smells good." Vegeta approached him with a curious expression. He had no shirt on, even if a towel had been wrapped around his neck.

"Oh, yeah." Goku said. "Thanks."

He tensed up a bit when Vegeta's arms wrapped him.

"Hey, when we're done eating… I'd… like to have sex with you." His voice was weaker than ever, but the words were clear.

"Wh-What?" Goku almost choked.

"I want to have sex with you…" Vegeta repeated, turning red in the face.

"Oh, uh…" Goku wasn't immediately sure how to react. It was so sudden, that it was almost nerve wracking.

"Can we…?" Vegeta asked.

"Yeah… okay…" Goku had to take a moment to breathe, his head was spinning.

Was this really the time for such a thing? After everything that had happened, he was asking to have sex? It seemed like a bad idea, but Vegeta himself was the one proposing, so maybe it was fine?

"But, Vegeta…?" Goku started again.

"Hm?" Vegeta was still leaning against his back.

"If… we're going to do that…" Goku considered his words, not wanting to upset him. "I don't… want you drinking beforehand."

"I'm not going to get drunk." Vegeta insisted. "It's just enough to give me a little buzz."

"I know, but still… I'd prefer you to be sober. Like… not under the influence of anything…" Goku said. His rule was clear. He wasn't going to let up until Vegeta gave up on the drink.

"Fine…" Vegeta gave in. "I'll put it back up."

Slipping it back into the fridge, he grabbed a can of coffee instead.

"Thanks…" Goku's response was nearly a whisper.

Vegeta sat down at the table, waiting for him to come over.

Eventually, Goku brought over two plates, which contained beef stew and rice.

He smiled, holding one out for him. "Here."

Vegeta took it, placing it in front of him. He grabbed the spoon that was offered to him, dipping out a spoonful and trying it. His eyes lit up. "It's delicious."

"I'm really glad you like it. I was worried I had used too much salt." Goku blushed a bit at the praise, before taking a bite of his own food.

"No, it's perfect, as usual. I always look forward to your cooking." Vegeta murmured, bashfully.

Goku lowered his head upon hearing that, as he gave a smile, fidgeting with his pants. "Well, good thing I've always liked cooking for you, so…"

"Always is a strong word, you know…" Vegeta scoffed a bit, but not out of disrespect. "When we were in the Hyperbolic Time Chamber, I was never the most grateful to you. I'd insult you every other chance I got and treated you like garbage. I don't understand how you tolerated me."

"The same way you tolerated me all that time…" Goku looked away. "I know I can be a lot to deal with, so I can't really blame you."

Vegeta paused. "You and I aren't even *comparable* . You're *kind* , Kakarot… and, well, I'm… not. You should *hate* me after everything I've done to you. The stuff I did when I first came here. It's unforgivable…"

"Maybe, and others certainly might feel that way, but… holding onto grudges like that isn't really my thing. Besides, now you're the strongest ally I have. That's something, ain't it?" Goku grinned at him.

Vegeta stared for a moment, before looking away. "Why are you like that…? Such a fool…"

"Well, if I'm being honest about it, I don't really think you're all *that* bad," Goku took a bite of his food. "at least not anymore."

"...Tch. Of course you'd say that." Vegeta murmured.

"No, it's true. I see it all the time, like when we were at the festival. You got all defensive of me and said that I was yours…" Goku said, smirked.

"I… that isn't about morals at all, you're just trying to rile me up, aren't you?" Vegeta pointed a finger accusingly.

"Maaaybe~" Goku teased. "So what are you going to do about it?"

"Oh, you'll see. Right after I finish my meal." Gaining an affectionate gaze from Goku, Vegeta made no haste in scarfing down all the contents on the plate, and drinking several more sips of the coffee.

Goku finished almost immediately after, sticking his dishes into the sink, which Vegeta washed off.

"Now, come with me." He grabbed his hand, pulling him to the bedroom.

"Uh, okay." Goku grinned again, allowing himself to be pulled.

When they entered, Vegeta immediately drew him into a kiss, before he pulled back with a gentle gaze, their eyes meeting. "Listen… I've been thinking about something."

As he said that, he pulled Goku's shirt out from being tucked in his pants. "I… know I can't take back what was done to you. That experience will always be a part of you, just as it has been for me. But, together, I want to create a new experience for you, for *both* of us. If you'll allow me to…"

"Vegeta… I…" Hearing such words from him left him unsure how to respond. Normally, he would have protested after what had just happened, but Vegeta was the one who was asking, so maybe it

was okay. Still… "I know I was teasing you about it, but… are you… sure you want to do this now? After everything that's happened… I don't want to take advantage of you…"

"I'll be fine. I'm used to it by now… it's normal for me…" Vegeta looked down, running a hand over Goku's chest.

"Maybe, but still, it shouldn't have to be. It's just…" Goku cupped his cheek, looking up at him with uncertainty. "Aren't you nervous…?"

"Well, of *course* I'm nervous… Even so…" Vegeta admitted, swallowing. "I refuse to let what happened take control of me. If I do, then I lose. It means I let them win."

"Still, you're… allowed… to let yourself feel those things… You know that, right…?" Goku touched his cheek. "You don't have to be strong all the time…"

"Don't worry, I said I'm fine. Believe me, I wouldn't suggest it if I wasn't ready for this… So…"

He took Goku's hand into his own, planting a kiss on his fingers. His stomach clenched but he pressed past his fear. "If you'd allow me the honors… I'd… like to take our relationship to the next level. But if you're still afraid, I'd understand."

Goku seemed at a loss for words. Even now, he couldn't rid himself of the shame he felt over his body, but the fact that Vegeta wanted him and loved him despite everything, it meant the world to him. "Okay… I know I told ya this before, but the only person in this entire universe that I'd want to touch me is you. Nobody else…"

"When we were talking on the phone, you said that I was special to you… That made me happy…" Vegeta smiled softly, running his fingers over Goku's shirt, teasing at the fabric, before he looked down. "Listen…, before we do this.. There's something I need to ask you… and I want you to be honest with me, okay?"

"What is it?" Goku asked.

"... It's… regarding our positions…" Vegeta considered his words nervously. "Are you… alright with letting me be the top…?"

"The top?" Goku inquired.

"Yeah, like…" Vegeta's face heated up when he realized Goku had no clue what he meant. "You know how… with a male and female… one is… more… dominant?"

"You mean like how the guy sticks his wiener into her-"

"You *idiot* , you shouldn't say stuff like that so flippantly!" Vegeta scolded. "But… yes, *that*... "

He looked down, trying to think of the best way to word it, his face has never been brighter. "With… two males… that works a bit different because we both have you know… the same parts. And, well, a lot of people like to take turns switching roles, but I'm… really not comfortable with being penetrated, so…"

"Ohhh… I gotcha…" Goku had to take an awkward moment to realize what he was talking about. But he could understand why, he wouldn't judge Vegeta for that. "Sure, I'm okay with that…"

"Wait, really?" Vegeta looked at him, a bit surprised.

"Sure, I mean, if that's what you're more comfortable with, then I don't mind... Honestly, I'd kinda prefer it if you took control…" Goku laughed nervously. "Is… that alright with you…?"

"Yeah. I'd… like that…" Vegeta confirmed awkwardly. "So… Can we… do this now…?"

As he asked that, he found himself tracing his hands along Goku's frame, desperately wanting to feel his skin, but not wanting to cross over any boundaries without permission.

"I dunno." Goku hesitated, his ears turning red as he fidgeted with the fabric of Vegeta's tanktop. "It won't… hurt me, will it? I'm kinda nervous…"

"You don't need to worry about that... I'll make sure you're prepared first… properly this time…" Vegeta assured him, not wanting him to be afraid, but also understanding from personal experience why he was.

Goku didn't respond. He seemed deep in thought about it.

"And, hey…" Vegeta spoke back up, sensing his uncertainty. He slipped a hand up inside of Goku's shirt in a sensual manner, as if he wanted to gauge his response. "If anything… gets to be too much for you, then I want you to tell me and we'll stop immediately."

He leaned closer, once again pressing their lips together, softly. "Deal?"

"Okay." Goku breathed into the kiss, offering a meek nod in return.

Vegeta gave a small smile at hearing that, tears welling up in his eyes. "...Thank you… for trusting me…"

There was a brief moment of silence as he steeled himself for what was to come before leaning back in and kissing Goku again. Tentatively, his tongue lightly pressed against Goku's lips in an attempt to open them.

After a moment, Goku let him in, responding in kind to Vegeta's advances and allowing the kiss to deepen. At first, it wasn't much different from all the other times they had kissed, but that's when Vegeta pushed him down against the bed, his hands already starting to wander. He freely let his fingers explore Goku's neck and chest, basking in the heat of the other man's skin under his touch.

A tingling warmth surged through Goku's body, his breathing became more rapid by the second as he felt Vegeta fondling his pec from outside the fabric of his gi.

Vegeta's own desires quickly started rising to the surface, and already, he was ready to go even further. He wanted to feel every part of his lover, and not leave a single inch of him untouched.

Vegeta leaned down and pressed his lips against Goku's neck, working his way down to Goku's chest.

He then reached down, teasing at his obi with his hands.

"May I?" He whispered, somewhat out of breath. Despite everything, he knew had to ask for permission. He didn't want to risk doing anything that Goku wasn't fully prepared for yet.

"Alright…" Goku said, a blush forming on his face. It seemed a bit strange since he had been naked around Vegeta before, multiple times, but it suddenly felt like a whole new experience.

Upon receiving permission, Vegeta gently untied it, swallowing the lump in his throat before slipping off Goku's gi and shirt, exposing his muscular torso beneath. Despite the weight that Goku had lost, Vegeta found himself drawn to the sight regardless.

"You're so beautiful… I know I keep saying that, but I can't help it…" He murmured, looking down at the other Saiyan with a gentle expression as he traced a hand over his abs.

Goku clutched at the covers, stifling a small laugh because of the ticklish sensation, but he was more focused on the praise that Vegeta had just given him. Being complimented in such a genuine way by the man who usually only had insults to speak towards people, wasn't something he expected and some part of him couldn't fight off the insecurities he felt over his body, knowing that Vegeta's full attention right now was on him.

Vegeta could tell that he was insecure. He had come to *recognize* that expression. And he so badly wanted to change it, for Goku to see in himself what *he* saw.

So the only thing he could do was show him.

His fingers danced lightly over the soft curves of Goku's pecs, it was the first time Vegeta had been able to let his touch roam so freely over Goku's body, the first time Goku had *allowed* him to.

Goku's eyes were on his hands, observing cautiously as they moved along his skin. And Vegeta could tell. He was anxious. They *both* were.

Vegeta continued his strokes with one of his hands, cupping his chin with the other and pressed their lips together, once again easing Goku into the rhythm of the kiss. Goku closed his eyes and returned it with enthusiasm, reaching up and running his fingers through Vegeta's hair, lacing them in the fluffy spikes.

Their tongues entwining, Vegeta tried desperately to communicate to him that he was wanted. Not just for his body, but everything *about* him. That, despite his scars, despite his past, despite *everything* , Vegeta still loved him just the way he was. That he could never judge him for any of that.

Out of breath, he pulled himself apart from the other Saiyan, but continued to stimulate Goku's pec, wanting to see how he was responding to his touch.

Goku's flushed face and the loving expression in his eyes told Vegeta more than enough, that Goku was just as excited about this as he was. Knowing that was a satisfaction like no other and he wanted to drink in every second of it.

Slowly, he began to leave a trail of kisses and bite marks down Goku's torso, feeling Goku's body heating up even more in response.

"Mm..." Goku murmured, his voice a bit shaky. He closed his eyes and allowed himself to be carried off by the moment, as if he weren't all there any more.

Vegeta's hands then moved down further, stopping at his thighs.

"Can I… take off your pants? Or do you still want to wait a while?" Once again, Vegeta needed full consent and wanted to give Goku the proper time to process what was happening. To process every step of this.

"No, it's fine… I'm alright with it." Goku's reply was barely above a whisper. He was still panting slightly.

"You sure?" Vegeta's ears turned red.

"Mhm." Goku nodded sheepishly.

"Alright." Vegeta's fingers worked their way back up to the waistline of his pants. He tugged at the fabric slightly, careful not to rush anything.

He paused for a moment to glance at Goku's face again, to check for any sign of uncertainty. But there was none. Instead, Goku was blushing, his eyes on Vegeta's hand. He looked vulnerable, more vulnerable than Vegeta had ever seen him before. He trusted him.

But knowing that is what scared Vegeta the most. Goku was Vegeta's responsibility now, to care for and look after. Everybody was counting on him to do just that, but if something went wrong and this hurt Goku despite his reassurance that it wouldn't, Vegeta wouldn't be able to forgive himself.

Self-inflicted scars peaked out from one of Goku's armbands, reminding Vegeta just how much was riding on this; of the trust that Goku had built in him. Trust that was fragile. He didn't want to lose that. He couldn't.

Swallowing, he felt his heart pounding in his chest. His hands were sweating. All of a sudden, he couldn't move.

It wasn't like Vegeta hadn't seen Goku naked before, so why was this so terrifying?

"What's wrong?" Goku asked, a bit insecure.

"It's… nothing… I just…" Vegeta forced the butterflies away from his stomach, and continued to lower Goku's pants, exposing the man's body almost entirely minus his underwear. Vegeta pressed a shaky hand against his inner thigh, accidentally brushing a thumb against his crotch. He gave a small smile when he heard another small giggle escape Goku's lips. "I want this to be perfect for you. But I'm afraid I'm going to mess it up…"

"It'll be fine…" Goku cupped his cheek. "I know you, Vegeta… You're not like *him* … or *them* … You wouldn't do what they did…"

Vegeta's cheeks flushed at the gesture despite the embarrassment and anxiety he was feeling. Goku's faith in him was touching.

"Heh, thanks for the vote of confidence..." He pressed his lips against Goku's hand, trying to maintain his composure. Slowly, the tension dissipated.

Unable to hold back the temptation any longer, Vegeta kissed the skin of his pec, His tongue tugging at Goku's nipple as he gave his other pec a small squeeze.

"Ah… Mn…" Goku immediately let out several breathy moans in response, clutching at the fabric of the sheets.

He's so sensitive… Vegeta's heart pounded in his chest, satisfied by the sounds escaping Goku's lips. *So precious...*

Goku's fingers continued to dig into the sheets as Vegeta stimulated the spot. The Prince's touch was filled with so much affection and tenderness. *Vegeta's hands… and his mouth, they feel so nice… I want him to touch me more…*

Feeling a rush of excitement upon seeing Goku's body respond to him, Vegeta's hand glided over his abs, coming to a stop at his hip.

His fingertips rested around the edges of Goku's underwear once more, teasing the bare skin underneath.

“Do you mind…?” Vegeta started to say, his voice just above a whisper, his face bright red.

He knew he kept asking for permission, they had *had* this discussion, but he wanted to be as sure as he could about what the man was comfortable with.

"No, it's fine. Go ahead…" Goku closed his eyes tightly, shaking his head. It was one of those rare occasions that he felt these desires, but his entire body was aching for attention. He needed this.

“Okay… I'm taking them off now…” Vegeta said, his voice awkward yet determined.

He worked off the fabric of Goku’s underwear slowly revealing to him his lover in all his glory. His nails roamed over the skin that had once been covered, his touch light and tentative.

Knowing that Vegeta's gaze was fixated solely on him and his body, Goku couldn't help but feel weak in the knees. He looked off to the side, avoiding his gaze due to how embarrassing this was.

Vegeta found the sight adorable, but had to double check that he wasn't making any mistakes.

He leaned down again, his lips brushing against the man's shoulder. Slowly, he lowered his mouth to Goku's neck, placing a kiss just below his ear. His tongue tickled the man's skin gently.

"Hey, what're you looking away for, huh? There's nothing to be shy about, Kakarot… Not with me, there's not…" he purred slightly, in spite of the fact that he too was nervous.

"I can't help it… This is… new for me, with you, so…" Goku couldn't finish the sentence.

"I know." Vegeta's lips curved upwards as his hand slid between Goku's thighs, delicately teasing at a spot that he had never touched before. "But that makes it all the more exciting, don't you think…?"

"Ah…" In that moment, Goku let out another soft moan from the sensitivity, his body trembling under Vegeta's touch.

Vegeta smiled a bit at the sight, his touch growing more confident as he continued.

"So tell me…"

Vegeta's gaze shifted downwards slightly to where his hand was resting, wanting to hear him say it. Wanting to be told what Goku wanted. He needed permission.

"Would you like me to take care of you?" He whispered, his voice low and slow.

"Take care of me…?"' Goku had to pause for a moment to ponder what he was suggesting. "Wait, y-you mean… with your... mouth, or...?"

He didn't finish the question, trying to get an idea of what he was asking. There were many possibilities that could come from such a statement.

Vegeta watched as he tried to muster up the courage to ask him directly. He was so cute to him when he was in this state, trying to process everything.

"Yeah…" He offered a gentle nod. "That is… If it's alright with you…" His hand continued to linger on that special place between Goku's legs, his own body already responding to it.

"Well, of course I'm okay with it, but... you're the one who's… uh... I mean... Shouldn't I do that for you instead?" Goku asked awkwardly.

"No," Vegeta answered instantly, his tone decisive. "I want to make you feel good. Can I…?"

He was the prince of their entire race, the prideful warrior race that was known for its strength and power. And yet, Vegeta felt entirely vulnerable before Goku at this moment.

"O-Okay…" Goku's head was spinning but he wasn't against it.

Vegeta smiled gently at hearing that.

"Now. Just try to relax for me. You're safe here, I'm not going to hurt you." Vegeta whispered softly, his voice tender and full of affection.

He let his words sink in, his eyes still focused on Goku and his face, making sure that he was comfortable.

Goku offered a small nod, deciding to trust him.

Vegeta lightly squeezed at the side of Goku's thigh, encouraging him to open his legs for him fully.

After a moment, Goku did so, shyly spreading out his legs and revealing himself to the other Saiyan.

In that moment, Vegeta felt a rush of pure emotions at the sight. Excitement, affection, the heat of lust grew hotter and hotter by the second. He lowered himself closer, close enough to taste what he had been wanting to for so long.

However, right as he started to, the scars on Goku's thighs caught the line of his vision, making it impossible to focus on anything else. Just knowing what they were from was a torment like none other.

So he kissed them. To say that he admired his strength for pressing forward despite everything. To once again thank him for trusting him enough to have sex with him after everything that had been done to him.

Above all, just to admire him, and tell him how beautiful he was.

just an art piece i drew that was inspired by this scene, pretend goku is naked

Not everybody liked their blemishes being focused on, Vegeta *sure as hell* didn't, but he knew Goku was the type of person who actually *relied* on this kind of reassurance to not feel ashamed of his body.

When he saw the blush on Goku's face grow even brighter, he could feel his heart pound in his chest, awestruck by the sight.

Turning his focus back to that beautiful spot between Goku's legs, his lips then opened, finally allowing himself to take in Goku's taste, his tongue tentatively testing out the tip before he took it inside.

And slowly, his lips, hands and tongue began to work together to make this the best experience for Goku. He took his time, wanting the other Saiyan to be able to feel and process everything.

When Goku let out a loud whimper, his back arching in response, Vegeta couldn't help but feel some pride in knowing that he was able to make his partner feel so good.

"You like that, Kakarot…?" His words were soft as he kissed the shaft.

"A-Ah… Yeah… Th-this feels amazing…" Goku's breathing was labored. He didn't know if it was normal to be this sensitive, but he could barely control himself. "You're… really good at this, Vegeta, But still… I feel like I should be doing this for you instead…"

"No, that's not necessary…" Vegeta said instantly, his tone clear and decisive. "I told you… I want this to be for you. You deserve to enjoy yourself…"

This was Vegeta's choice. Nobody was making him do this. He wanted Goku to experience nothing but pleasure; to give him a moment of peace to ease all of the pain he had felt. To take him back from the clutches of that man who had defiled him and tell him that he still had value. That, to Vegeta, he was as beautiful as ever.

"Well… I-If you're… really sure about it…" Goku unintentionally stammered from his nerves. As much as he had wanted to do it for Vegeta, and even offered to, the truth was he was still nervous

about it. It had been a source of trauma for him, so, down deep, he was glad that Vegeta wasn't expecting that from him.

Another faint blush spread across Vegeta's face at Goku's confirmation to go ahead, a look of gratitude and affection in his eyes.

He then continued, his tongue and movements even more intense than before. His hands moved around Goku's thighs, kneading his muscles in a slow, rhythmical motion that he knew would feel good.

All of a sudden, Goku moaned again, even louder this time. His fingers dug into his pillow and his other arm covered his face, his muscles tensing.

Vegeta was almost sure the other man was already close to climaxing.

His own body was starting to become excited in response, but he persevered through. He couldn't allow himself to lose himself this early on or else he wouldn't last.

But it was hard not to, however, when Goku was responding this way. He was so sensitive, and his every moan, even the small ones, only served to make Vegeta more eager.

After a minute, Goku's breaths grew heavier, his hand starting to move down towards where Vegeta's face was, as if desperate to hurry this along.

Vegeta, however, took Goku's hand into his, holding it in place to make sure he got to fully experience this with no distractions.

"Ah…" Goku's body trembled in response to the pleasure that was building up inside of him. He looked down at Vegeta, his eyelids becoming heavy as he met his prince's gaze.

Vegeta had him close to climax, and he wasn't going to let up now. His jaw was beginning to ache from the effort but he wasn't about to let that stop him.

"Vegeta, I… I need to…" Goku moaned his name, pulling at his pillow case again and covering his face with it in the process. His shoulders were shaking and saliva had dripped down his cheek, but he was too overwhelmed to think to wipe it away.

"It's alright, Kakarot, you can let it out…" Vegeta purred quietly, as he switched back to using his hand to stroke him with, moving even quicker than before.

At long last, Goku felt himself give in entirely, unable to keep control when he finally reached his climax, releasing after a moment.

Having expected it, Vegeta accepted it into his mouth without hesitation. Goku's taste on his tongue, a warmth entered his chest as he swallowed it. It was so sweet.

Once he was sure the other Saiyan had finished, Vegeta removed his mouth from him. His face was flushed with a pinkish hue.

He then looked up at Goku, to see that he was still hiding his face under his pillow case.

"Are you alright…?" The prince asked quietly, his tone hushed and soft. Slowly, he moved closer, gently teasing at the fabric Goku was covering his face with. "Hey, let me see that… Don't hide your face from me… Kakarot…"

Vegeta wanted so badly to see Goku's face, to make sure that he hadn't messed up.

Despite his pleas, however, Goku's grip on the pillow case remained strong and stubborn.

"Please…" Vegeta urged, his voice gentle and comforting, as he tried again, tugging at the pillow case.

After a small struggle, he finally saw it, the bright flush on Goku's face from how shy he was. But there were also tears streaming down his cheeks.

Vegeta's eyes widened when he saw them, his voice now sounding a bit more concerned.

"...W-what's wrong? Why are you crying?" He asked with genuine concern, as he brushed some fingers across his cheek to wipe away his tears. "Hey, talk to me… Did I do something wrong?"

Vegeta was still somewhat in the haze of passion, but he had to make sure that Goku was okay.

He pulled closer in a panic, desperately waiting for Goku to answer.

"No. That was… great, I just…" Goku trailed off, breaking down. Sobs escaped his lips. "I feel like I don't deserve you… Or this…"

"No..." Vegeta said softly, his tone gentle and soothing. "Don't say that…"

His arms wrapped around Goku, trying to hold him in place. He didn't want to let him go, not yet. Not when he was so emotionally raw like this. He ran his fingers through Goku's hair, wanting to comfort him. "You deserve *everything* good in this world, you hear me? I'm just happy you enjoyed it… I was worried you hadn't…"

He pulled Goku even closer to him, wanting him to know how much he meant it.

Even though the words made him feel nervous, he knew there was no other way he could have worded it. He truly loved Goku in this way. It was something relatively new to him, sure, but it felt right.

"I… I need you, Vegeta…" Goku placed a hand against Vegeta's shoulder, burying his face in his chest. He couldn't stop crying no matter how much he wanted to.

"I need you too..." Vegeta kept his arms wrapped around Goku, letting the man lean against him as much as he needed to.

He rubbed his fingers against Goku's back, continuing to caress him, trying to give him as much affection as possible in that moment.

"No... I mean inside of me... Please… It has to be you… You're the only one who can stop it. I always wanted my first time with a man to be with you… but he stole that… So please… take me back… Take me away from him… I'm begging you…" Goku's voice cracked. He wasn't sure he was making any sense, and now that the words had left his mouth, he suddenly felt dirty, afraid that Vegeta was going to judge him.

"...Of course..." Vegeta let out a soft murmur when he realized what he was talking about. He hugged him tightly, pressing his lips against his ear and intimately brushing his hand across his chest to stimulate his pec like before, the other rubbing his tail scar to provide him with extra sensations.

Goku felt his own body respond to it, closing his eyes and losing himself to Vegeta's touch.

There was no shame or guilt this time, however; everything felt so right and so good. Knowing just how much Vegeta loved and cared for him.

This was okay.

He felt safe.

Vegeta continued to kiss and tease Goku, his breath growing more and more shallow by the second. It was as if his entire being was about to collapse with need. He could only feel guilty for what he was about to do, but he couldn't stop himself. He needed this. He wanted this.

And so did Goku.

Unable to hold back any longer, Vegeta reached over, pulling a bottle out from the dresser drawer.

"What's that?" Goku asked him, taking a look at it.

"This? It's lubricant… It should help make this easier and reduce any pain you may feel…" Vegeta explained, feeling a bit awkward.

"Oh… O-Ok." Goku said, not entirely seeming to understand, but slightly nervous, watching Vegeta squirt the substance into his hand and warm it up in his fingers.

"Here… I need you to spread out your legs for me. Can you do that?" Vegeta asked, putting the bottle on top of the dresser.

After a moment, Goku complied, doing as told. "Like this?"

"Yeah. That's perfect." Vegeta smiled softly, before becoming slightly hesitant. He needed to let Goku know what he was doing and give him some kind of warning first. "I want you to know this might feel a bit weird at first, but try to bear with me… I'm going to stick my fingers inside of you… And I want you to tell me if it gets to be too much for you."

"O-Okay…" Goku repeated, swallowing.

"Good… Now just try to stay relaxed for me, okay?" Vegeta said again, moving his hand down slightly. After a moment, his fingers reached Goku's entrance, and nervously, he stuck one inside.

Goku winced slightly at the pressure, grabbing Vegeta's shoulder instinctively, but due to Vegeta's skin being slippery from the lubricant, however, it helped a lot with easing him into it.

But Vegeta could still see that it was uncomfortable for Goku.

"Sorry, I'm not hurting you, am I…?" He asked in a low and concerned whisper, his heart pounding in his chest. As his finger slowly started moving in and out, he couldn't help but worry all over again that he was making a mistake.

Goku was silent for a moment, before finally muttering out a response with a quiet blush. "A little bit… It's kind of overwhelming."

"It is…? Do you want me to stop…?" Vegeta halted his moments while he waited for a response.

"...No... I-It's fine… Just keep going..." Goku nervously gave him permission to continue.

"You sure? I don't want to hurt you…" Vegeta said, wanting more than anything to make sure he wasn't crossing over any lines.

"Don't worry about it… I keep telling you… I-ah… trust you." Goku assured him.

"Well, alright… If you're sure about it…" Vegeta continued his slow and gentle movements, working his way deeper inside of Goku bit by bit.

All of a sudden, Goku let out a loud sigh of pleasure signaling to Vegeta that he had found what he was looking for.

"*So this is Kakarot's sweet spot…* " Vegeta prodded at the area a bit, blushing as he watched Goku respond to his touch. He was careful at first, waiting for any reaction that might tell him to stop or change what he was doing.

"Vegeta…" Goku clawed at Vegeta's back, wrapping his arms around his neck. His breathing was erratic and uneven. "I'm scared…"

Despite his words, Goku seemed to be enjoying himself.

"Shh… It's okay… You're safe with me… but I need you to relax… I can't enter if you're too tense…"

That's when Goku closed his eyes and buried his face against Vegeta's chest.

"Nonono… Don't hide your face from me…" Vegeta said softly, his expression filled with nothing but affection for the other Saiyan. "I need to know that you're okay with this… Hey, can you look at me…? Please…? Just let me see your eyes…"

Goku pulled back, in response, finally meeting his gaze. His heart swooned as Vegeta offered a genuine smile, to let him know that he wasn't judging him, that he had no reason to be so self-conscious; That he was beautiful in Vegeta's eyes.

"That's it… You're doing great…, just keep your eyes on me, okay…?" Vegeta whispered, satisfied when Goku blushed even brighter, choosing to comply, although his gaze eventually traversed down to Vegeta's chest instead.

Vegeta was okay with that, he understood that eye contact was nerve wracking for Goku when he was like this. But as long as he could see his lover's facial expressions, that's all that mattered to him.

Slowly, he kept up his treatment, continuing to stimulate him for just a little while longer, his finger moving at a steady pace, his touch light but firm.

As time passed, Goku's moans became more frequent, his breathing more shallow and quick. All the while Vegeta found himself growing more and more overwhelmed with desire. He couldn't contain himself much longer. He had his fingers, sure, but he wanted so badly to go inside of him for *real* . To *feel* him.

"Kakarot..." He whispered again, his voice filled with a mix of anticipation and concern. He wanted to give Goku more, to take it to the next level. "Are you ready?"

"…Yeah, I think so." Goku gave a small nod of confirmation, spreading out his legs even further and clutching at the sheets, tighter than earlier as he looked at Vegeta with a mix of anxiety but also trust. "Just... try to be gentle with me, okay...?"

"I will be..." Vegeta pulled his fingers out, his expression soft and kind. "I swear it…"

At that moment, Vegeta grabbed the bottle of lube again, squirting out some more to use on himself.

Goku awkwardly watched him free himself of his pants and lather himself down with the liquid.

After a minute, the other Saiyan finally seemed satisfied, leaning back in.

"You're so gorgeous… My Kakarot… Mn…" Vegeta's warm lips met Goku's neck again as he started grinding against his entrance, letting out a sensual growl in the process.

"Ngh…" Goku's heart fluttered at the compliment, but his senses were too heightened for him to know how to respond.

Letting out another moan, Vegeta had reached the point where he couldn't hold back anymore. He was finally ready to go all the way.

Goku braced himself for what was to come. He couldn't deny how scared he was. Yet he was excited at the same time.

Goku thought about it. Slowly, he took a breath, doing exactly as Vegeta expected of him.

With a calming and protective aura, Vegeta wiped some hair from his face. "I'm going in now… Just try to relax for me."

"Okay." Goku closed his eyes again, nervous… But then he felt a bit more than expected, like something was slowly filling him. "Ahh…!"

It's so big!

Immediately, he felt himself being stretched, letting out a small whimper in response. It wasn't exactly painful like when *that man* had done it, but it still felt strange. Tears welled down his cheeks. "Vegeta…"

"Shh… It's alright… You're going to be alright, Kakarot…" Vegeta desperately kissed him all over, and hugged him tightly, gently caressing the back of his head, anything that he thought might help calm him down some. He reassured him again and again, as he had so many other times, his tone calming and sympathetic. "I promise you should start to feel better in a moment, okay…? And if it doesn't, then… You can do me instead…"

"What? But earlier, you said-"

"I know what I said, you idiot…" Vegeta swallowed, fully ready to put himself in a position that he really wasn't comfortable with if it meant for making up for his mistake. His eyebrows furrowed due to the pressure he was feeling. Goku was so tight. "But I don't want you to be in pain…"

"Still, that wouldn't be fair to you…! Just… let me see, okay?" Goku insisted, wrapping his legs around his lover.

"...Are you… really sure?" Vegeta asked with uncertainty, hoping more than anything that Goku wasn't doing this for his sake. "You can say no…"

"No, it's alright… Just do it." For a brief moment, Goku had almost felt ashamed at what they were doing. Terrified even.

But he trusted Vegeta. And he wanted to see this through to the end. He loved him too much to back out now.

"...Well… alright…" Vegeta swallowed, his voice uneven and nervous. "I'm… going to start moving inside of you… and I want you to tell me how it feels… C-Can you do that?"

"Yeah, I think so…" Goku nodded, blushing a bit himself. *Vegeta's so cute when he's shy*...

Upon receiving a confirmation, Vegeta slowly began to thrust his hips, moving at a gentle pace, just enough to test the waters.

"Mn…!" Goku's back arched, unable to stop himself from digging into the skin of Vegeta's shoulders. He closed his eyes, heat consuming his body. Only moments later did Vegeta make contact with that special spot from before.

"Ahh…!" His body's instincts immediately took over, causing him to surrender to the feeling completely, letting himself be filled by his lover. "Woah, that's…"

Vegeta watched the transformation of the other Saiyan, his eyes full of love. He couldn't resist the urge to caress the side of Goku's face. "Feeling any better?"

"Mhm." Goku's eyes were half-lidded in a state of pleasure and confusion. He continued to squeeze Vegeta's shoulders, his fingernails pressing deeply into his skin in an attempt to ground himself.

"There, see…? I told you, didn't I…?" Vegeta kept his voice gentle.

"Hehe… You're so big, Vegeta. I was almost worried it wouldn't fit..." Goku couldn't quite believe how good it felt, as if it was completely new to him. And it kind of was. The first time wasn't consensual.

"Aw, did I give you a surprise…?" Vegeta smirked a bit. His own eyes fell half-lidded as he slid deeper inside, making it clear he was enjoying himself just as much as the other Saiyan was.

"Yeah, kinda… I… Nng… Ah… This feels incredible..." A soft expression was painted on Goku's face like he was stuck in a daze.

"Well, I'm just glad you're enjoying yourself…" Vegeta didn't want to say anything vulgar, but it was hard to resist the urge to tease Goku a bit since the man was so far gone. Speeding up his pace a bit, he found himself nibbling on Goku's chest again and then his nipple, leaving dozens of little bite marks in his wake. It caused Goku to squeak a few times, but the area was just so soft and plump. He couldn't help himself. "Hnng… Kakarot…"

"Mn… Hey, Vegeta…? Could you maybe go a little harder…? Please…" Goku suddenly begged. He usually didn't get like this except under rare circumstances, but he was desperate right now. He looked up at the other Saiyan, his expression filled with uncharacteristic lust and need.

Vegeta raised an eyebrow, the corners of his lips curling upwards.

"Oh, so you want me to go *harder* now, do you…? But earlier you told me to be *gentle*." Vegeta's voice was filled with a playful edge. Seeing Goku so horny was clearly entertaining to him.

"Yeah, but I didn't know it would feel this good." Goku rationalized, weakly. "Please... I can't... take this much longer…"

"Mn... Someone's needy. You said you might not last much longer. So tell me, how much longer can you hold on for?" Vegeta wanted to see just how much more eager the man would become. It wasn't often he got to see him being so horny.

"Vegeta…" Goku whined, not liking to be teased.

"What's wrong, you do want more, don't you?" Vegeta's tone grew more intense as he asked the question. He was completely enjoying having the upper hand in this situation, and seeing Goku in this state.

"Don't tease me about this…" There were tears welling up in Goku's eyes from the heightened sensations consuming his body, a hint of shame on his face.

Vegeta's expression softened after that, knowing fully well that he was playing with fire here. He didn't want to push too far and risk ruining this moment for them. Especially considering that certain words and mannerisms could potentially be triggering for Goku.

Sure, Bulma had been into some heavy kinks, but Goku wasn't like her, he was sensitive to these things, so Vegeta knew he had to be careful with him.

"I'm sorry..." He said, apologetically. "I didn't mean to upset you… If you want me to go harder, then I will… How's this?"

Goku felt a sense of relief as he could feel the other Saiyan's body begin to slide deeper and deeper inside of him, filling him up more and more with each time he went back in, his pace slowly increasing.

"Mn…! Nngh… Mmm…" His body was responding to every touch and every small movement. Every little shift in pressure was sending him closer and closer to the edge. His grip on Vegeta's shoulders tightened, his breathing short and sharp. He felt like he was about to break apart, about to lose himself completely in the feeling. His muscles were tense, and his entire body was trembling, but he wanted this so badly he could barely stand it. "Vegeta... I think I'm about to…"

"So close again already?" Vegeta couldn't resist smiling again, taking some time to flick his tongue across Goku's ear lobe, as his hands returned to the marbled flesh on his chest, squeezing at them. "You're so sensitive…"

"I-ah can't help it… Ya feel so good in me… Mn…!" Goku trembled at the new sensations, ones that were too intense to describe. His eyes squeezed shut, having long since lost control of his mind and body.

Vegeta watched with adoration as Goku writhed in pleasure, letting out a series of shallow breaths.

"Vegeta… I'm…!" The Saiyan cried out, about to reach the edge, holding himself so tightly against Vegeta that his nails were drawing blood. He couldn't hold on for much longer. He was so, so close…

"Mn… I love you, Kakarot..." Vegeta left a sensual kiss on his neck to express his feelings in the only way he knew how. He didn't say those words often, but the sight beneath him was just so precious, he wanted so desperately for Goku to say the words back.

And Goku seemed to understand that.

"I love you too…" He was crying.

As Vegeta continued to thrust into him fiercely, Goku could feel it building up within him, he could feel his body begging for release. He was at his lover's mercy right now, and he was willing to let himself be completely consumed by him.

"Vegeta… Vegeta..." His voice became more high-pitched as he tried desperately to communicate his feelings. His words were nonsensical, nothing like a normal coherent sentence. Even so, Vegeta understood. He knew how Goku felt, what he was trying to say, because he felt the same.

"Ah, ah, hnng, Vegeta!" At long last, Goku finally reached his threshold, unleashing everything he had been building up inside of him at once, making a mess of himself in the process.

He breathed out deeply, feeling lightheaded, his body wracked by pleasure, and all he could do was lie on the bed, his body tense, gasping for air.

"Kakarot..." The very sight of it was enough to send Vegeta over the edge. Unable to hold back any longer, He came into his mate, letting out a satisfied moan at finally being able to unleash his desire.

He knew that Goku was fully his now, This moment was perfect, he couldn't have asked for anything more.

Pulling out, he laid down next to Goku, his body drenched with sweat as he attempted to catch his breath. He was exhausted and his mind was still foggy from his climax.

All he wanted right now was to stay right where he was. He felt Goku's body, he felt his presence, and that was all he needed.

"So…" Vegeta almost couldn't continue, he was too tired and too overwhelmed with emotions. Instead, he lifted his head up and gently kissed Goku's cheek, letting that gesture alone communicate his feelings for him. "Tell me… Did you enjoy yourself…?"

"Hnnng… ahh… Yeah… that was amazing." It was difficult for Goku to speak. He was drained, both physically and emotionally, and his voice was barely a whisper. At this point, what Vegeta was asking him was obvious. His body was still aching, still tense. But the moment had been perfect, and a part of him almost wanted to do this again sometime. But another part of him didn't quite share that sentiment. He just wanted to relax and recover for now.

Goku's lips curled up in a smile with a small hint of embarrassment as it began to dawn on that Vegeta had just seen the most vulnerable side of him.

"Honestly, I didn't think it was possible for me to feel that way…" Goku continued, his tone more calm and level-headed than earlier. "But you... I don't know how you did it."

"Heh, I rather enjoy seeing you get so sensitive to my touch… and hearing you cry out my name. It was cute…" Vegeta's smile grew slightly as he looked over at Goku.. He enjoyed making him embarrassed like this, even if he was still a bit shaken after the experience they just had together. It was such a power trip for Vegeta, and he wanted nothing more than to do it again.

Goku couldn't help but blush a bit at his teasing. He pouted a bit. "Vegeta…"

"What? You know it's true." Vegeta still wore a playful grin, as if this was all some sort of game to him.

"Yeah, but still, I told you not to tease me about it..." Goku puffed out his cheek slightly, a bright blush on his face.

Vegeta's expression turned into one of mock surprise, and he couldn't hide his amusement. "Come on, there's nothing to be embarrassed about…."

"I can't help it… Bein' in that position is weird t'me, y'know….?" Goku shyly covered his face.

"Weird? Weird how?" Vegeta's tone was a mix of amusement, but underlying concern.

No response.

"Babe, look at me… There's nothing wrong with *enjoying* yourself, or letting yourself be happy… It's *normal* …" He then moved a bit closer, so that his face was directly in front of Goku's covered one. He wanted to have a moment to admire the other's beauty, to see his face.

But that's when he heard him stifle a sob.

"You're crying again… Is… Is everything okay…?" He knew that Goku was exhausted, and that his emotions were all over the place, but still, he couldn't stand to see this much pain or sadness from someone he loved. He had to comfort him.

"I'm just... worried I wasn't good enough for you or something… You deserve so much better than me…" Goku mumbled insecurely, refusing to meet his gaze.

"What…? How could you think that?" Vegeta's tone turned serious again. He wanted more than anything to communicate to him just how much this had meant to him. "You were fantastic. Everything *about* this was..."

"...You… really mean it...? I… I really did okay...?" Goku's voice was strained, as he moved his arm down to shyly meet Vegeta's gaze.

" *More* than that… You did *better* than okay. The moment we shared together was perfect, and I loved every *minute* of it, because it was *you* … Nobody else…" Vegeta's expression was soft and tender. He didn't want Goku to have any doubts. He wanted him to enjoy and treasure this moment, not feel bad about it.

Goku stared at him for a moment, his ears heating up at the genuine sincerity. Yet his expression remained slightly insecure, as if there was something weighing on his mind.

"...Vegeta...?" He started again, with a small shy smile.

"Hm?" Vegeta looked up, raising an eyebrow as Goku spoke. He was curious where this was going, and why Goku was still being so shy. He thought he had already reassured Goku enough times. "What is it…?"

"...Can I... kiss you?" Goku struggled to ask. They had kissed multiple times before now - hell, they had just had *sex* - so why was it so hard for him to ask for such a favor *now* ?"

"Of course you can… Come here." Vegeta held Goku close as they kissed, his passion burning hot.

Reaching up and embracing his neck, Goku almost felt as though he was being consumed by him, but he wasn't complaining. It felt nice.

More than that, it felt *right* . He was safe with Vegeta.

Vegeta felt Goku hugging him, clinging to his body as they kissed. Goku's eyes were half lidded as he met Vegeta's gaze with adoration.

Vegeta looked back at Goku, still feeling his lips on his own. He couldn't help but smile softly as he reached out to caress and stroke Goku's hair. He needed to touch him, he needed to know that this moment was real, that it wasn't just a dream.

After a long moment the two broke the kiss, pulling back.

"Sorry, I should probably clean myself up, huh?" Goku murmured awkwardly.

"It's okay. Why don't you let me handle that…?" Vegeta moved down, licking up the sticky substance off of Goku's stomach and chest.

"Vegeta…! That tickles…! Stop that!! Use a paper towel!" Goku burst out laughing, gaining a smirk from Vegeta in response, who always found the sight of Goku laughing to be the most precious thing.

"Why? It'd be such a waste. You taste so good."

"I-I what? Vegeta…" Goku had never been more flustered in his life, but as he watched Vegeta lick it, he paused, the blush on his cheeks remaining. "What's that stuff taste like anyways…?"

"It's sweet… or at least *yours* is…"

"Then… I'd… like to try yours sometime too… If that's okay with you…" Goku lowered his head sheepishly.

"...Heh, I doubt you'd be interested…" Vegeta grabbed some tissues from the drawer, and began to clean up around Goku's entrance. "Mine's bitter, or so I've been told…"

"That's okay with me… If it's yours…"

"...Tch… Moron…" Vegeta scoffed, wadding up the tissue and tossing it into the trash can. "You're something else, you know that…?"

"...Oh, hey, y'know what…? I just realized something." Goku mused aloud.

"What is it?" Vegeta leaned his cheek on Goku's shoulder, looking up at him.

"So…. you know how you're a prince, right? Well, if the two of us got married, then wouldn't that make *me* a prince too…?"

Vegeta blushed at the sudden discussion of marriage. Honestly he wasn't sure how to respond at first.

"W-What are you saying? D-Don't be ridiculous…!" Vegeta sputtered, but it was clear that he was just embarrassed. His face was as red as a tomato and he was looking down.

Goku smiled at seeing that. "Well, would you *like* to? Get married, I mean…"

"...You're… asking *me* …?" Vegeta swallowed, taken aback.

"Well, duh, who *else, silly* ?" Goku teased.

"...But… Can we actually do that?" Vegeta stared at him in shock, looking like he had never even heard of such a concept before.

"Yeah, sure, why couldn't we…?" Goku looked at him with confusion.

"Well, we're both *men* , so…" Vegeta's voice was uneven as he tried to *gather* his thoughts. "Many places would never allow that…"

"Then we'll just have to go somewhere that it is allowed. See? Problem solved…" Goku caressed his cheek with a smile.

"... When I was a child, I was told by my Father that same sex marriage was wrong… That it went against *nature* . Yet here you are, another guy, asking to marry *me*... It's *insane*... ! Of course I'd say yes, you clown." Vegeta embraced his neck, his shoulders shaking.

"Awesome! Hehehe…" Goku giggled, grinning stupidly as his lover hugged him.

The idea of being married to each other almost didn't feel real, but here they were.

The two Saiyans couldn't be happier.

…

Goku woke up hours later, to discover that Vegeta had fallen asleep beside him.

They were both in bed now, naked just as they had been earlier.

From the looks of the light that was flowing in, it had to have been early into the next morning, but still not dawn yet, although it was close.

The rays that were illuminating off of Vegeta's face and his body made the sight so much more alluring to Goku.

Vegeta's so cute when he sleeps. It's not often I get to see him this relaxed. Usually, he's always scowling.

He blamed it on the fact that he had just woken up and was still half asleep, but he couldn't help himself. Reaching over, he ran a hand through his partner's hair which was soft and silky to the touch.

Tracing his fingers down Vegeta's face, brushing his thumb over his lips, and then down further, admiring the soft lumps of flesh on his chest, with a small smile. *His pecs are tiny.*

And his skin is so smooth… Is that just a Saiyan thing? Because Chichi once said the same thing about me…

Why can't I stop touching him…?

Vegeta…

Leaning in, he pulled Vegeta's body closer to him, kissing his neck, and then his chest.

"Mn." Vegeta moaned a bit, opening his eyes, dazed, as he placed a hand on Goku's head. "Kakarot…? W-What are you doing…?"

"Oh, uh, sorry…! This isn't what it looks like, I swear. It's just… you were so pretty in the moonlight-oh god. I'm so sorry, please don't be mad at me." Goku covered his face with his hands in embarrassment.

"It's… fine… It felt nice."

"Really? You mean… You're okay with it?" Goku seemed nervous.

"Yes, but… In the future, if you're going to start kissing on me, just wake me up first…" Vegeta sighed.

"I know…" Goku mumbled. He looked like a child who had got caught with his hand in the cookie jar. It was adorable.

Vegeta couldn't possibly stay mad at that face.

Goku leaned in again, continuing where he left off, the small sounds escaping Vegeta's lips as he nibbled on his neck quickly becoming addictive. Goku licked at his earlobe, his hot breath awakening something inside of Vegeta.

Vegeta embraced him, kissing Goku's upper shoulder. Goku let out a small "eep", however, when the other man's teeth dug into his skin.

"What's the matter…?" Vegeta smirked a bit. "Too much for you?"

"N-no. You just startled me is all..." Goku puffed his cheek out a bit, trying to recover from the bite by holding it.

"It's not *my* fault you let your guard down…" Vegeta refused any responsibility.

"I did *not* ." Goku denied, bitterly.

"If that's true, then why did my teeth make contact with you, huh? Maybe you *wanted* me to bite you… Is that it…?"

"I-" Goku cut himself off, his gaze was evasive. "Maaaybe…"

"Ah, so I was right, after all. Then tell me, Kakarot…" In a matter of seconds, Vegeta flipped their positions so he was now on top of Goku. He had a mischievous grin plastered on his face, hands pressed against Goku's chest. "Shall I turn things up a notch…?"

Goku's eyes widened a bit, but he certainly wasn't complaining. He liked it when Vegeta got feisty. "Do your worst. I dare you."

"Believe me. I *will* ." He said that, but instead of biting him again, he ran several fingers over Goku's stomach, tickling him.

"Wait, this isn't fair, Vegeta! No tickling allowed, that's cheating! Hahaha…!" Goku attempted to push him off, but failed miserably.

"Oh, Kakarot, you know I'll exploit *any* weakness of yours, even *this* one…" Vegeta refused to relent.

"You're such a jerk!" Goku couldn't stop laughing. "I wouldn't do this to *you* ."

Vegeta teased. "You *wouldn't* ? Now isn't *that* rich, considering you had no *problem* making moves on me while I was *asleep* just a moment ago."

"I said I'm sorry! I swear I won't do it again!" Goku insisted. "Just have mercy on me! I'm begging you…!"

"Giving in already? Very well… " Vegeta gave a satisfied smirk. "Hey, I've got an idea…"

"What?" Goku inquired.

"Why don't you and I…" He twirled his finger around Goku's chest in a flirtatious manner. "go on that date we were talking about before…?"

"Y-You mean today?" Goku asked.

"Yeah, are you up for it?" Vegeta offered.

"Sure, I am kinda hungry. Just lemme get around." Goku said, jumping up and heading to the dresser to grab some clothes.

Vegeta smiled softly as he watched him.

Future husband and rival.

Has a nice ring.

It's almost hard to believe, but this is my life now.

And I wouldn't trade it for anything.

…

A/N:

1. ***This was my first time writing an actual sex scene, so I hope somebody enjoyed that.***

2. ***I don't know my plans for this story yet, but I may eventually have an epilogue for Vegeta's and Goku's wedding.***

If not, I imagine them getting married on a planet known as Oubus, and the wedding ritual is so crazy and outlandish but it's fun, there may be fusion involved or they get stuck to each other until midnight. If y'all wanna chip in on this, for fun ideas, I can definitely take advice. 🤣

Anywho, I want to thank all of you who have stuck with me though this, because it's been a really long journey, and means so so much to me. ♥

Author's note

Edited as of November 22nd, 2023:

I don't know how many people are still reading this, but I want to say thank you to everybody who has encouraged me throughout this writing process, and reviewed (literally every comment boosts my confidence no matter how small it is).

I'm sure some may have questions about the Vegeta stuff in the recent chapter. I didn't want to make it seem like I was pushing Goku to the side, but as I thought about it, it made sense for Vegeta to eventually have his own break down, since he's spent this entire story so far being the supporter. Getting to explore that more vulnerable side to a character who always seems so strong, the one who takes the role of Goku's anchor in this story, it was truly both fun and emotional for me.

Everything in the last update revolves around themes I've never written about in my life before(sexual abuse, sexual content in general like the Vegekaka stuff and the hospitalization) so I was very nervous upon posting it. It makes me genuinely happy that people enjoyed it so much.

I hope to write more eventually to conclude this. And I'm hoping chapters in the future will be shorter, I know these long updates are a lot.

Thanks so much again!! ❤️

Date And Reunuion

Chapter by KK Vegekaka (karinakamichi)

Story: Even The Strongest, Chapter 10, Date And Reunion

A/N: Hi, guys. It's been so long, sorry, but have this little date chapter!!!! 😭

…

The sky around Goku and Vegeta was slowly transitioning to a brilliant bluish hue. The crisp air hit Goku's face as he stuck his head out the window of their car.

The radio played, creating a soft tranquil atmosphere between the two Saiyans.

Blocking out the sun with his hand, Goku's dark eyes fixated on the array of colors with fascination and intrigue at the sights around and under them.

Vegeta had opted to stay quiet, but couldn't help but glance over from time to time at how enamored Goku was.

Watching him just enjoying the breeze with such innocence, his hair blowing in the wind, it was almost hypnotizing, making it hard to focus on the road ahead of them.

Heat rose to his cheeks when he caught Goku glancing back at him with a smile.

Their eyes met for a second, and Goku's smile just grew larger.

"What? Is something on my face?" He asked quizzically, his head tilting to the side a bit.

Vegeta quickly shifted his gaze back towards the road, keeping his lips pursed.

"No, it's nothing. You just-" he paused slightly, clearing his throat. "You look like an idiot sticking your head out the window like that.”

"Haha! But it's fun." Goku countered in his usual laid back manner. "Besides, it's too beautiful to not enjoy it.”

"Yeah, I guess… " Vegeta mumbled. Although he'd never admit it aloud, he also enjoyed the view. It was quite nice, but he was more focused on another view, and that was Goku.

He glanced over at him again, and the man in question still had his head sticking out the window, now sticking his tongue out.

Damn it, now even his tongue looks adorable.

Stupid Kakarot…

The car continued on its path, the sounds of the breeze hitting the sides of the car now mixed with the sound of the radio.

Vegeta was very clearly struggling to keep his eyes focused on the road, especially when he could feel Goku's hair brushing against his skin as he leaned against his shoulder.

Vegeta tensed up at the sudden proximity between them, feeling heat crawl up to his cheeks.

He swallowed harshly, trying to maintain his composure.

"Hey, are you wearing cologne?” Goku sniffed him suddenly. “You smell nice.”

Vegeta, who was already flustered enough as he was, became even redder at Goku's unexpected compliment. He tried to keep an unbothered demeanor, but failed miserably. "I... uhh, yeah, I am. I

put some on earlier, before we left..."

Vegeta bit his lip when he felt Goku's nose nuzzle against his neck.

“It smells like some kind of fruit… or…” Goku noted thoughtfully.

“I-It’s strawberries, you idiot..." He stammered. “Now stop clinging to me. I need to concentrate on driving.”

“Okay..." Goku pulled back to the window with a pout.

Vegeta let out a slow breath, grateful for the regained space between them.

However, that quickly changed to guilt as he noticed the slight frown on his partner's face, realizing that Goku apparently missed the warmth of his presence.

He finally caved, sighing. “Okay, *fine* . If it's really that important to you, then I guess I don't mind if you lean on me a *little bit* …”

Goku perked up after that, leaning back over to rest his cheek against Vegeta's shoulder. “I love you…”

“Yeah, yeah, whatever…” Vegeta tried to pretend it was less embarrassing than it was.

As they continued their journey, the pair fell quiet, only the drone of the radio and the sounds from outside breaking the silence.

Occasionally, Vegeta would steal glances down at the other, finding himself captivated by even the simple sight of the other man.

Eventually, he found the courage to break the silence.

“We're almost there…”

When Goku didn't respond, Vegeta glanced over again to realize he had fallen asleep. His mouth was hanging wide open, drool dripping down the side of his chin and soaking into the fabric of Vegeta's sleeve.

Of course he fell asleep. I swear, he's like a damn child sometimes.

Despite his annoyance, he couldn't deny that the other Saiyan looked adorable.

He reached over to turn the volume on the radio down, letting the background noise settle into a low murmur.

He continued driving as the scenery transitioned to the city, tall buildings and vehicles surrounding them now.

The car came to a stop at a red light, and Vegeta glanced one more time at Goku. He found himself staring for a bit too long, captivated by the man's peaceful expression while asleep.

He was tempted to reach out to caress his face, but he quickly decided against it. After all, the light was going to turn green any second.

As expected, the light turned green shortly after, and Vegeta reluctantly shifted his gaze back to the road, pushing aside his desires.

As they finally arrived at their destination about fifteen minutes later, Vegeta pulled into a parking spot and shut the car off, rolling up the windows.

He then took another quick glance at Goku, who was still blissfully asleep and reached over, gently shaking his shoulder. "Hey, wake up. We're here."

He spoke in a soft tone, not wanting to startle him awake.

“Huh…?” Goku squinted at the light as he sat up.

Vegeta couldn't help but find the sight of Goku slowly waking up rather endearing, although he'd never admit it aloud.

He leaned back against the seat, folding his arms across his chest.

"Morning, sleepyhead," he teased. "I said we're here. Now you can stop drooling on my shirt.”

"Oh, whoops." Goku giggled groggily. "Guess I fell asleep.”

"Yeah, you were pretty conked. You were even letting out little noises, too. Snoring like a damn chainsaw." he replied, still bantering.

"Yeah, so what if I snore?" Goku huffed. "It's not like I can help it.”

With a pout, he stuck his tongue out at Vegeta, practically tempting the other Saiyan at this point.

Vegeta's gaze darkened slightly as he watched him. Something about it sent a shiver down his spine...

“Careful with that tongue of yours, Kakarot. You wouldn't want to lose it.” He leaned over closer towards Goku, his gaze locking onto the other man's features. "Or were you just *trying* to tempt me?”

“Maybe...” Goku teased.

“Hm?” Vegeta smirked in response, slowly running his thumb over Goku's lower lip, his touch gentle yet possessive. His other hand found its way to his thigh, his fingers gently tracing patterns into the fabric of his pants.

Goku’s heart pounded in his chest at the contact, his face turning redder by the moment, their faces only inches apart.

Vegeta couldn't help but chuckle again at the sight of Goku's flustered state, enjoying the effect he had on him. He slowly moved closer, their lips now almost touching, and Goku's eyes started to close on instinct, allowing Vegeta to close the space between them.

The moment their lips met, Vegeta felt a rush of electricity run through his body. It was a familiar feeling that he never grew tired of.

He could feel the other’s lips part, allowing him to slip his tongue in, tasting him, exploring him.

The taste of Goku's mouth only served to heighten Vegeta's desire to devour him, driving him wild.

After a long time, he pulled back to catch his breath.

Goku stared at him, pressing a hand against his chest, attempting to create some space between them again. "We should get going now before we end up making out in the car all day."

"You're right, probably best we don't cause a scene.” Although the thought did seem pretty enticing, Vegeta reluctantly pulled back, removing his hand from Goku's thigh. “Besides, I suppose I *should* treat you to a nice meal, given the date I promised..."

He leaned back against the seat, putting on a more composed facade as he looked at the other man with a smirk. "Ready to go?”

Goku nodded, his cheeks still slightly flushed as he tried to compose himself.

"...Yeah." he replied, his fingers fumbling around with the seat belt buckle, but he stopped for a moment.

Down deep, a part of him couldn't help but feel nervous over this.

As much as he was happy to spend time with Vegeta, the idea of having to eat steak right now was quickly causing him to lose his nerves.

They hadn't been here in over two years, and the last time they were was the same day that-

He forced himself to breathe.

Maybe they could go somewhere else instead?

No, Vegeta had invited him here. It would have been rude to turn him down, and he didn't want to worry him. He couldn't-

"Hey," Vegeta interrupted his thought process. He could sense the underlying unease in Goku's demeanor, the way his shoulders were stiff, and his eyes were averted.

He knew that memories of that day were probably resurfacing.

He held onto his hand firmly, gently rubbing his knuckles with his thumb, hoping to soothe him as best as he could. He gently broke the silence, his voice hushed. "We don't have to stay here, you know. We can always go somewhere else to eat."

Goku considered his words, averting his gaze to take in his surroundings. Unable to bring himself to respond immediately and not wanting to disappoint him, he gnawed at his bottom lip with insecurity.

Vegeta noticed the way Goku's gaze flicked around the surroundings, his unease growing with each passing moment.

He wanted to give him space, let him think it through, but he couldn't stand the silence between them either.

He let out a quiet sigh, continuing to rub his thumb against the back of his hand.

"Talk to me, Kakarot," he prompted gently. "What do you want to do?"

He squeezed his hand a little tighter, willing him to just open up and let him in.

"...It's okay. I came here because I wanted to... to spend time with you…" Goku decided, sheepishly. "So whatever you want to do… I'm alright with that…"

Vegeta studied him for a moment, sensing he had made up his mind. He brought Goku's knuckles to his lips, gently kissing them. "If you're absolutely sure of it. Then let's go."

He opened the door, and the two climbed out of the car, heading for the entrance of the restaurant.

When they entered, Goku immediately found himself greeted by the familiar aroma of meat and various other items, a wave of nausea washing over him in response.

The scent was too strong.

He tried to ignore the looks of the people around him, some part of his mind telling him they were all watching him, or judging him somehow.

He had lost so much weight in the past years, it was obvious even in his arms. He felt an instinctive need to hide himself from them.

He wasn't usually the type to deal with social anxiety, but there were so many people today. Without thinking, he clung against Vegeta's arm, as if to ground himself. He smiled lightly. "Hey, ya mind if we go find a booth like last time? I'd rather not sit at the tables out here."

Vegeta blushed, but averted his gaze. “Yeah, fine. I guess I would prefer somewhere quieter.”

…

The two found a secluded booth, lit by candle lights and away from other diners before a waitress came by and offered them a couple menus. Goku was grateful for the extra privacy the location offered, knowing he didn't have to be surrounded by people right now.

Vegeta grabbed a menu, holding it out to share with him. “You have an idea what you want?”

Rubbing a hand over his arm, Goku took a moment to gaze at the menu, but upon realizing just how much it had changed, he found his eyes darting around the page at some of the foreign characters. "...I'm... I'm no good at reading Kanji... Maybe you could pick something out for me, like the last time we were here…?”

Roshi had taught Goku a lot of basic education but Kanji had always been something Goku struggled with.

“You’re over forty years old and still can’t read kanji…?" Vegeta chuckled, with a small roll of his eyes. He relented, a hint of fondness in his voice. "Alright, fine… I’ll pick something for you…”

Vegeta glanced back down at the menu, skimming through the list of dishes he knew Goku would like.

"You know you really should learn how to properly read one of these days..." he commented offhand, still scanning the menu for suitable options.

"Hey, I can read katakana and hiragana just fine... It's not my fault they decided to add another writing system..." Goku huffed, folding his arms.

"You do know that Kanji came first, right?" Vegeta rested his elbow on the desk, cheek in his hand.

Goku blushed, looking away. "Yeah, so...?”

Vegeta leaned back in the booth with amusement. "Oh, come on, it's not that complicated. I learned it just fine, and I'm only five years older than you.”

“Sh-Shut up…” Goku stammered, covering his face in his hands. “Just pick something out already…”

Bantering with Vegeta had helped ease some of the anxiety he was feeling, but a part of him was still worried, knowing Vegeta was expecting him to eat.

Vegeta looked back at the menu once more, finally making up his mind.

“Okay, I think I know what you’d like…” he folded the menu back up and placed it back on the table, before getting up. “I'll be back in a moment.”

Goku watched him walk off to speak to a waitress.

He absentmindedly unwrapped his fork, spoon and knife from the paper towel in front of him, fidgeting around with the silverware until Vegeta returned to the spot next to him.

“She says she'll take our order in a few minutes…” Vegeta’s eyes caught the way he was holding the silverware, particularly the knife. He frowned. “Are you alright?”

Upon hearing his worried tone, Goku forced himself to perk up, putting it to the side.

“Yeah, I'm fine.” He scooted over closer to him and rested his face against Vegeta's shoulder with a smile.

Blushing at the contact, Vegeta opened his mouth to say something, but was cut off by another voice entirely.

"You said you had decided?" It was the waitress. She was standing there with a small menu pad in hand.

"Uh, yeah…" Vegeta coughed. "We'll start with miso soup, and some gyoza for an appetizer.”

"Would you like some kind of steak as the entree? We have a combo going on right now that you could get two appetizers with it for half off." She offered.

Vegeta pondered the offer for a moment. It did sound like a good deal, and steak was why they had come here after all.

"Alright, I'll bite…" he reluctantly sighed. "I'll take two filet mignons, medium rare, with two bowls of Miso Soup and two orders of Gyoza."

"So I have two steak combos, medium rare, both with miso soup and gyoza." She noted. "Anything to drink?"

"For me, three of the largest bottles of sake you have.” Vegeta responded immediately, not even taking the time to think about it. He needed something to take the edge off. "Kakarot, what do you want...?”

Goku frowned when he heard how many bottles of sake Vegeta had ordered, but decided not to comment on it.

"Taro tapioca juice is fine… No ice please..." Goku answered, playing around with the fabric of Vegeta's armor.

“Alright, I'll be right back with that.” The waitress smiled before walking off.

Once she was gone, Vegeta reached a hand around him to hold Goku in his arms. His hand wandered over Goku's side, a tense silence settling between them.

Goku still seemed so incredibly fragile in that moment, his thin frame and his ribcage still so obvious, despite the weight he had gained...

Feeling a chill from the overhead restaurant's vent, Goku suddenly shivered a bit.

"Are you cold?" Vegeta whispered softly against his hair as he felt another violent shiver run down his back. His hand continued to rub his side soothingly, trying to generate some sort of warmth.

"Yeah, a little…" Goku let his bangs shadow his eyes.

"Moron… That's what you get for wearing short sleeves…" Vegeta scolded him lightly, but moved his hand back up to rub over his arm, hoping to stimulate some warmth for him. "You should probably-"

He opened his mouth to say something, but as he did, he was cut off.

"Goku?" Goku looked up to see Krillin standing there.

"Krillin… H-Hey…" He replied, barely above a whisper as he briefly paused in pulling on his shirt. This gained a look from Vegeta.

"Hey, it *is* you… Vegeta too… I knew I recognized that energy." Krillin grinned in excitement. "How've you been, buddy?"

"I'm doing okay…" Goku looked down, avoiding his gaze. "I'm sorry, by the way… for not messaging you back… It's just been so long, I didn't know what you'd say. We've only talked a couple times since then. I was kinda nervous about it."

“Yeah, I figured as much. Don't worry about it. I know everything's kinda awkward for you lately.” Krillin shrugged it off. “It's good you’ve got Vegeta with you though. I can tell he's been taking care of you.”

“He's been really nice to me.” Goku felt a bit giddy as he replied.

“Hey, I'm not nice. Don't call me that…” Vegeta playfully bit his neck with a blush.

Goku yelped a bit, before giggling.

Upon seeing them, the corners of Krillin's lips curved upwards slightly.

“So… I take it you two are together then…?” Krillin inquired. “That's what Bulma told me anyways.”

“Mhm.” Goku’s cheeks turned pink as he nodded. “We've been together about two years now, I think.”

“I need to get him a ring…” Vegeta ran a hand over Goku’s only long enough to touch his ring finger, which for Saiyans was actually his index finger.

“A ring? But why?” Goku furrowed an eyebrow.

Vegeta’s eyes narrowed as Goku questioned his statement. Was he really confused by that?

“For the same reason anybody would give their partner a ring, you idiot. It’s a symbol of our *commitment*... A representation of the fact that you and I are in a serious devoted *relationship* .” Vegeta insisted, possessively rubbing his hand. “You’re *mine* . And I want people to know that, especially if we're gonna be married. And not just that, but… we're both Saiyans, so… I want this to be special…”

Goku couldn't help but let his face heat up again as Vegeta's hand touched his own. Truth be told, a part of him liked when Vegeta got possessive, it made him happy.

So wearing a ring would represent the fact that he belonged only to Vegeta…

He didn't mind that.

And just seeing how personal this was for Vegeta made it personal to him as well. The thought of it made him giddy for some reason. “Yeah, but… Wouldn't it just get in the way of my training, though?”

Vegeta’s eyes only narrowed further, a muscle in his jaw clenching, both slightly annoyed and somewhat baffled by his logic.

“Are you… *serious*... ?” He asked, incredulously, causing Goku to squeak nervously. “It’s a *ring*. Something you wear on your damn finger. How would it get in the way of training? Black wore one just *fine* .”

"Mn, maybe… I'm just afraid it'd get damaged in combat or something." Goku thought about it. “Fights can get pretty rough and stuff, so...”

“There are plenty of materials in the universe that are strong enough to withstand attacks, you dolt.” Vegeta still couldn't believe that he was actually having this conversation right now. “And besides, you don't have to wear it *all* the time...”

"Hm… Well, okay… I do kinda see your point.… And If it's really that important… I guess I could wear one.” Goku shyly thought it over, scratching the back of his head.

It was all Vegeta could do not to grab him and press his lips against his right then and there. The fact that he was actually considering it, that he hadn’t immediately brushed the idea away, made his heart skip.

“Good… That’s what I like to hear.” He said gently as he brought his hand up to brush through his hair.

“...Man, it's crazy how much time has passed.” Krillin mused. “The last time Goku and I really had the proper chance to speak, he didn't even know if you liked him or not, yet here you two are talking about getting married.”

“It has been a while.” Goku noted.

“Yeah, things have changed a lot since then, I suppose.” Vegeta kept his arm around Goku, his touch remaining possessive and firm.

Thinking back to when they had first gotten together, it really was mind boggling just how far they’d come. Two and a half years ago, he hadn't even known if Goku saw him in the same way either.

And also… Goku had improved so much since then.

“So what have you been up to lately, Goku?” Krillin asked.

“Oh, uh… Nothing much…” Goku murmured. “I did start training again, though… Just yesterday… I had Vegeta spar with me for a while… It was kinda hard to keep up with him because of how much weight I've lost due to my eating disorder, but I'm sure I'll get there soon enough.”

The mention of the eating disorder suddenly snapped Vegeta back to reality, any warm, fuzzy feelings leaving him entirely as Krillin’s eyes widened in response.

“W-Wait… you have… an *eating disorder* ? When did this happen…?” Krillin questioned, shock coating his words. “Is *that* why you were in the hospital?”

“Y-Yeah, you mean you really didn't know…?” Goku paused. “I thought somebody would have told you by now…”

“No…” Krillin shook his head. “I only knew about the cutting because you had told me…”

Goku looked down. “Oh, uh…”

This was just getting more and more awkward by the second.

Vegeta looked away upon hearing Goku’s words, but he couldn’t really blame him. He rubbed his hip gently in an attempt to comfort him.

“W-Well in any case, I'm doing a bit better now, so you don't need to worry about me.” Goku assured him awkwardly.

“...I guess that’s good to hear…” Krillin replied, but Vegeta could tell that his words weren’t entirely genuine. He still felt uncomfortable. He didn’t blame him for it. He still didn’t know the full extent of what Goku had been through, after all… and that it would likely always be somewhat of a struggle. “Hey, listen… Whenever you get a chance, maybe the two of us should go and train under Master Roshi again for a while. What do you say? It'd be just like old times.”

“Train with Master Roshi? Really…?” Goku furrowed an eyebrow, guilt striking his heart. He knew that it really wasn’t a good idea until he had gotten better, but now he also felt bad at the idea of turning down the request. He hadn't seen Roshi in several years. “I don’t know… I…”

“Hey, it's okay, you don't have to decide on anything right away.” Krillin assured him. “I know you're under a lot of stress at the moment, but if you change your mind, just let me know, okay?”

Goku bit down on the inside of his cheek, his mind starting to work in overdrive. Should he give in and agree, or would that only make things worse for him…? He'd probably be separated from Vegeta for a while if he said yes. The stress of having to face such a decision when he wasn’t even fully recovered made him antsy. Still, he didn't want to be rude.

“Mn… Alright…” He replied softly. “…I’ll think about it…”

Vegeta glanced at him, noticing how tense he was. Recognizing his body language, he could tell he was overthinking things again.

Of *course* he was. After all, that's what he *always* did.

“Great…!” Krillin smiled awkwardly, sensing Goku's uncertainty as well. After a moment of silence, he spoke back up, scratching his head. “So uh, listen, I kinda gotta get back to 18, but I'll be sure to keep you updated, alright?” Krillin moved back, preparing to leave the booth. He could tell that Vegeta and Goku probably wanted to be alone, so he decided to leave them to it.

“Mhm… Thanks, Krillin...” Goku nodded with a smile.

“It’s no problem, Goku. Let me know if you need anything.” Krillin waved a bit before walking off.

“Later, Krillin.” Goku replied, weakly.

A wave of tension slowly began to wash over his body as Krillin finally walked away. It wasn’t like he'd had anything personal against Krillin, but it was hard not to worry about Goku's mind state. The moment Krillin was out of earshot, he could feel Goku start to tremble.

His grip on his hip tightened slightly. “Easy… You don’t need to get yourself all worked up…”

“Sorry… It’s just a lot to think about.” Goku's voice shook.

“I know. But try not to let it drag you down too much. We can talk about it later.” Vegeta said, as Goku slowly began to calm down, relaxing in his arms.

It was then that the waitress returned. "Excuse me. I have your food."

“Thanks…” Keeping his hold on Goku, Vegeta quickly took a sip of the sake she placed down in front of him, relishing the way it went down his throat.

As the waitress placed Goku's tapioca juice and the food dishes in front of him, the sight of the steak caught Goku's gaze, filling him with a secret sense of dread, which he didn't want to voice. He leaned closer against Vegeta, fidgeting with his wrist cuff.

Vegeta glanced down at him for a moment before placing the sake bottle on the table beside him.

He then pulled one of the plates of steak closer to him and took the knife from next to Goku, slowly cutting into it to create multiple slices.

He stabbed one of the pieces with a fork and offered one to Goku. “You want some steak? It looks good, doesn't it? Here, have a bite.”

Goku stared at it for a moment before opening his mouth and chewing on it. It took every bit of strength he had to swallow it.

Vegeta’s eyes shifted as he watched him. He could already tell that he was having trouble with eating again and he didn't want to push him past his boundaries.

Still, he had to try.

“Do you want another?” He picked up another piece of meat and offered that one to him as well.

Much to Vegeta's relief, Goku cooperated and bit into that one as well.

But as Vegeta offered another, Goku hid his face against Vegeta's shoulder.

“No more meat…” His voice cracked.

“No more meat, got it. What about the miso soup? That should be easy on your stomach, right?” Vegeta urged, pulling over a soup bowl and grabbing a spoon.

He scooped up a spoonful of seaweed and tofu, carefully lifting it up to him so he didn't spill the liquid on him.

Goku nervously took it into his mouth, chewing and swallowing it with more ease than the steak.

Bit by bit, Goku continued to take bites of it until there was only broth left.

Vegeta finally put the spoon back into the bowl before grabbing his sake bottle again and taking another sip. After that he picked up a piece of Gyoza, offering it to him. “Do you want any Gyoza…?”

“Maybe one…” Goku spoke weakly, his ears heating up, as Vegeta gave him one.

He slowly chewed it up, allowing the flavor to settle on his tongue.

It tasted good, but as he swallowed it, a voice in the back of his head shouted at him, cursing him for giving up control, cursing him for eating anything at all, telling him to throw it back up, to purge. And eating in front of Vegeta right now, in front of *anybody* , it made him feel sick, like he was being judged somehow.

Tears welled up in his eyes, his shoulders trembling when he processed the fingers running through his hair.

He couldn’t stand making him worry like this. This was supposed to be a date. They were supposed to be happy. But he couldn't even eat properly right now.

“Shh… It’s okay. You don’t need to force yourself…” Vegeta whispered, kissing his forehead and handing him the cup of tapioca juice. “Here… Just focus on what you *can* eat. If that's mostly liquid, then that's alright…”

Goku took a sip from it, relaxing somewhat in his embrace. “...I'm sorry… I feel like I'm letting you down again… I can't stand being this way all the time… I just want to be able to handle food better… and myself…”

He trailed off, not sure how to explain his feelings.

“It's fine… Try not to beat yourself up over this.” Vegeta moved his hand down, rubbing his shoulder soothingly, as he grabbed his bottle of sake, downing some more of it. “I know you're trying to get better… But these things take time… Expecting it to change overnight will only upset you more, and I care far more about you than your ability to eat like everybody else, okay? So take it slow… I can only imagine how much this crap weighs down on you sometimes…”

“...I wanna get better, I really do, but…” Goku looked down, becoming frustrated, not sure how else to respond. He wished he could be easier on himself as well, if only to keep from worrying Vegeta.

Taking a sip of the tapioca juice and chewing up one of the balls, he struggled to swallow it. It had the same strange taste as always. “It feels like I always end up dragging you down with me anyways no matter what I do… I don't wanna be this way…”

Vegeta felt at a loss at hearing him say that. He hated seeing him like this… as if his worth all boiled down to what Vegeta thought of him.

He reached out and placed a hand on his back in an effort to soothe him a little.

“You’re not dragging me down… I'm just worried about you. I keep telling you that… I wouldn't be here if I thought that you were a burden or a waste of my time…” He leaned over, gently pressing his lips against his hair. “You mean the world to me, Kakarot… And I can't stand seeing you put yourself down so much… It tears me to pieces. I just want you to be happy… But I know it’s not that easy.”

“I don't wanna be this way... I swear I’m trying to work on myself.” Goku buried his face against Vegeta's neck.

“I know you are.” Vegeta hugged him tighter. “I know you are, and I’m proud of you...”

Blushing into his hold, Goku slightly tightened his grip on the drink in his lap. He looked down. “I love you…’

“I love you too.” Vegeta hand shifted.

“Kiss me, ‘geta…” Goku looked up, sheepishly inching closer to him.

Vegeta could feel a small buzz coming on from the alcohol as Goku said those words. He blinked at first, not having expected the usage of the nickname. His face turned bright red, but he obliged in the end, closing his eyes and meeting his lips with his own. It was soft and chaste, leaving Vegeta with the desire for more, but he didn't push him, instead just reveling in his warmth, allowing their tongues to clash, exploring each other's mouths in silence.

After pulling apart, Goku looked down again, his face flushed, as he rested against him, giving Vegeta space to eat his steak and then the Gyoza.

Vegeta couldn't help but once again find himself drawn to the sight of him. The red tint on his face had done numbers to his sense of reasoning, making it hard to focus on anything else.

Why does he have to be so adorable?

Trying to distract himself, he chugged down the rest of the alcohol bottle, and swiftly moved onto the next one, wiping some of the liquid away that had dripped down the side of his chin.

Goku accidentally sucked up a tapioca ball as he listened to him gulp it down.

He knew he had no right to say anything or judge him, but it was a lot of alcohol. He had no idea how this would affect him and it kind of scared him to see him drink so much, especially as he reach for the third bottle.

"Hey, Kakarot…” Vegeta suddenly spoke up, after a large silence had settled between them.

“Huh?” Goku paused.

Vegeta nudged at him tightly. "Let's go somewhere else… I have some place in mind. I think you'd like it."

“A-Alright.” Goku paused.

Downing the rest of his sake, Vegeta shifted, slipping out of the booth and pulling him by the hand. “Come on.”

Vegeta led him out, to where the waitress was and left not just the price of their meal, as well as a big tip to compensate for how much they'd eaten.

With that being done, he looked back to Goku, grabbing him by the hand and guiding him outside.

Vegeta guided Goku over to the passenger’s side, and opened the car door.

"Should you... really be driving right now?" Goku asked nervously. "You were just drinking…”

He wasn't stumbling, but then again, maybe most of the effects of the alcohol hadn't settled it yet…

“I’ll be alright… Stop being a mother hen…” He retorted, rolling his eyes slightly. “C’mon, I know where I’m taking us.”

"Fine, but if you start swerving, I'm stopping the car." Goku warned.

Vegeta snorted in mild amusement at that, amused by his stubbornness even at times like this.

“Yeah, yeah, we’ll just see about that…” He teased with a smirk as he gently hoisted him into the car. He then closed the door and quickly walked over to the driver’s side to get in.

Once he shut the driver’s door and buckled himself in, he started the engine. With a glance over at Goku’s seatbelt, to ensure he was fastened in, he shifted and began to turn the car around.

“The place isn't very far from here. So it shouldn't take long to get there…” Vegeta said as he drove out onto the road, keeping the car at a steady speed to prevent Goku from stressing out too much.

Vegeta focused his attention entirely on the road before him, making sure to drive as smoothly as possible. He could feel Goku’s eyes on him occasionally, observing his every move.

Eventually, Vegeta noticed a few familiar landmarks, a hint of satisfaction appearing in his gaze as he put on the turn signal.

Almost immediately after, Goku’s complaints started up all over again.

“Ugh… Where are we going…?” He groaned.

“Calm down, we’re almost there.” Vegeta replied.

At Goku’s reluctant silence and pout, he continued onward. For the most part, the drive was rather quiet, the radio the only real source of noise.

After a couple of minutes, Vegeta’s eyes widened as his destination suddenly came into view.

He felt Goku glance his way as he pulled into the parking lot and pulled off the road and into a spot.

"We're here." He said, more to himself than to Goku.

"Where are we?" Goku asked.

“You'll see.” Vegeta replied, and unbuckled his seatbelt. He then left the car, and walked around it to open the passenger’s side door, preparing to help Goku out.

Goku got out of the seat, standing up.

Once Goku was no longer in the car, Vegeta took a step back to admire his surroundings, a wave of memories surging through him.

He then glanced at him. "Come on, follow me."

Goku blinked and followed him, taking in his environment, not recognizing the place. But in all fairness, Goku didn't know a lot of places despite having lived in this area for a large portion of his life.

It appeared to be some kind of mall? Goku looked around with a curious gaze at the different shopping centers.

As he walked, Goku found himself unintentionally limping a bit due to the pain in his backside. Their lovemaking from the night before had really done a number on him.

Vegeta glanced sidelong at Goku, noticing the slight limp in his step. He couldn't help but smirk slightly, finding it amusing that he was the cause of it. He nudged Goku gently, raising an eyebrow. "Heh, it seems like you're having a little trouble walking there, Kakarot. I didn't think I was *that* rough on you last night.”

“...! Vegeta…! Don't say that stuff…!” Goku’s face flashed bright red, his fists clenching in the air in an embarrassed panic. “We're out in public…!”

Vegeta's smirk only grew wider at Goku's reaction.

"What's wrong? You're not getting *shy* on me *now,* are you? I thought you enjoyed it." he teased, letting his hand move down to Goku's hip, giving it a firm squeeze. "If I remember correctly, you were begging for me to-"

"Shhhh!!!! I told you not here! People are watching us…" Goku quickly slapped his own hand over Vegeta's mouth before he could finish his sentence, his face now completely red, trying to ignore that host that was leading them to a booth.

Goku's attempts to shush him only served to amuse Vegeta further. With a playful smirk, he licked a stripe up the palm, watching the surprise and embarrassment mix on Goku's face.

“Eehhhh!” Goku's eyes widened, and he jumped back, defensively wiping his hand on his pants. “What’d you lick me for? You’re such a jerk!”

Vegeta barked out a laugh at the reaction, enjoying the way Goku made a big deal out of the little gesture.

“Afraid of a little saliva?" he retorted with a smug smile, not bothering to hide his amusement. "You had my mouth in a lot more intimate places last night, but you're going to freak out because I licked your hand…”

"Pfft-! Shut up…!" Goku huffed, still trying to compose himself, wiping his hand on his outfit. "You're insufferable, you know that? What’d you bring me here for anyways…?”

“You'll see.” Vegeta led him by several more shops, and down a hall until they got to a particular store. “Come here for a second..." He said suddenly, coming to a halt.

"What is it?" Goku hummed, following after him.

Vegeta made no comment in response as he led Goku into the store. Once inside, the first thing that really caught Goku’s attention was the massive variety of clothing and decorations all around them. Most of them were of a bright, almost neon color pallet. There were a few darker colors scattered throughout, but for the most part it was an incredibly energetic and lively atmosphere.

“A clothing store?” Goku noted.

"What kind of jacket do you want? Pick out one." Vegeta led him over to a jacket rack.

"What?" Goku blinked again, confused for a second.

“Just do what I say.” Vegeta rolled his eyes. “I don’t care which one it is, just pick a jacket you think looks nice…”

"Uh... Okay..." Goku walked over to the jacket rack, looking through the outfits until he came across one, pulling it out. "I like this fluffy orange one here."

Vegeta looked over and saw what he was holding, one eyebrow arching. Of course he’d choose the one that would be most visible to the eye. “You really like that thing…?”

"Yeah, it's super soft and flexible too. See?" Goku pulled it on, just to test it out. It had a hood on it, with fur around the edges.

After having seen it on him, Vegeta snorted to himself. It did look pretty stupid, and was probably far too big on him, but it had a certain charm to it. It would definitely stand out, that was for sure.

“You look like an idiot right now…” He feigned annoyance, though the words didn’t come off as genuine. “But fine… if that's really what you want, then I'll buy it for you.”

“I’m not really sure what all this is for, but thanks, I guess…” Goku said, sheepishly.

“Don't mention it.” Vegeta hadn't picked up one for himself. Maybe it was because he already had long sleeves.

Once they reached the cashier, he asked Goku to take it off so it could be scanned.

After a few moments, the price was totaled up and Vegeta pulled out his credit card, paying for the jacket. After that, he thanked the clerk and turned to Goku.

“Alright, got it. Now come on.” Vegeta instructed.

“O-Okay.” Goku stammered, but followed Vegeta to another section of the store entirely. Upon entering another door, Goku’s eyes went wide.

There was a giant ice floor inside of it.

Ice floor inside of a mall?

What?

"Woah... What is this place...?" Goku asked in amazement. He paused when several people flitting around on the ice caught his attention.

Vegeta let out a hum of amusement as the excitement on Goku's face instantly became apparent.

"It's an ice skating rink." He explained, still feeling a hint of satisfaction. “You want to try it out?”

There was an almost teasing edge to his own voice, before tossing him his jacket when he saw him shiver. “Here, put your jacket on before you freeze to death.”

Goku caught it, pulling it on. “I don't know, Vegeta… I've never done this before… I'm afraid I'd just fall.”

“Quit worrying. You’ll be fine as long as you stay close to me and don’t do anything reckless.” Vegeta said simply, walking ahead.

“Well, jeez, that's not very reassuring,” Goku muttered bitterly, before Vegeta walked over to one of the men in charge of the place, renting skates for both him and Goku.

“Here. Put these on.” Vegeta instructed him.

Goku begrudgingly followed him, sitting down on a bench and putting the shoes on.

After his own skates were on, Vegeta stood up and walked over, holding a hand out to him. “Alright, let’s go.”

“You're drunk right now. How are you even able to stand in these things?” Goku nervously took his hand, struggling to keep his balance, as Vegeta slowly led him out towards the ice.

“It’s just a matter of practice, it's not a big deal.” Vegeta said simply. “Now come on.

“Woah, hey, don't pull me…” Goku wobbled in the strange shoes. He had never even done *regular* skating before, let alone *ice* skating. He wasn't sure how to feel about this.

He clung tightly against Vegeta's shoulders, feeling unsteady on his feet. Why had he let Vegeta drag him into this?

Vegeta chuckled as Goku clung to him with tight desperation, not at all minding it. It was rather humorous and endearing to see him so vulnerable and shaky like this, something he didn’t get to see very often. “Relax, you’re going to be fine…”

Vegeta kept his grip on his hand as they stepped out onto the ice. “Just take it easy. I'm not going to let you fall. You have to trust me.”

"Yeah, of course that's easy for *you* to say." Goku retorted, his nerves wound up.

“Of course it is.” Vegeta replied in a rather smug tone. “And it’d be a lot easier if you would just relax and stop clinging onto me like some insect.”

“Sh…Shut up! I am not clinging to you like a- and even if I am, this is all *your* fault…” Goku pushed at him slightly, only to fall on his butt in the process. “Ow…!”

Vegeta’s expression shifted into one of more concern now, but at the same time, he was fighting back a laugh as he looked down at him.

“You moron, I told you not to do anything reckless, didn't I?” He offered a hand to him.

“You told me to stop clinging to you and *now* look what happened…” Goku huffed, grumpily, but took it.

“I swear, you’re so damn stubborn sometimes…” Vegeta muttered under his breath, pulling him back up and keeping a firm grip on his waist. “I meant *walk on your own* , not *push me away* .”

“Yeah, whatever, you're such a jerk.” Goku pouted, looking away from his lover down at his feet.

Vegeta rolled his eyes, giving his waist one firm squeeze to get his attention once again. “I’m trying to help you. You could at least be more grateful.”

Goku's lips quivered in frustration, he was obviously nervous, almost falling once more. Vegeta moved so just fine, why couldn't *he* ?

Seeing how tense Goku was at the moment, Vegeta let out a sigh. He was just making himself even more likely to fall by being so on edge.

“Hey…, I told you to relax. You’re not going to fall as long as you hold onto my hand. You trust me, right?”

"...Yeah, okay, fine, I'll try it, but don't let go of me..." Keeping his hold on Vegeta's hand, Goku attempted to move his feet, his legs wobbling underneath him.

“I won't...” Vegeta replied, a hint of a reassuring tone in his voice as he held onto his hand tightly and helped him balance.

Goku slowly made an effort and inevitably progressed despite his initial hesitation.

“See? You’re doing fine.” Vegeta complimented him. “Just keep going like that.”

They continued to skate together for a little while, Vegeta still guiding him. He was amused by how uncoordinated and clumsy Goku’s movements were, and felt a bit of sympathy when he saw him stumble a few times, but he never let go of his grip even for a second.

After a little while, Vegeta glanced at him, seeing as they had reached a certain spot on the ice now. “Hey. I want you to try closing your eyes for a second.”

"W-Why?" Goku stammered nervously, but did as told.

“Just do it. And don’t let go of my hand, okay?”

He waited a moment, until Goku had closed his eyes. Once he had, Vegeta began to move more quickly, taking the lead. Without his sight, Goku only had his senses to focus on the feeling of the ice beneath his feet and Vegeta’s grip on his hand.

“Hey…” Goku stammered, nervously. “Vegeta…”

“Calm down, I already told you I’m not going to let you fall.” He spoke reassuringly, continuing to guide him, picking up the pace a bit more. “Keep your eyes closed, and stay with me, got it?”

Goku's grip on his hand remained tight as they flitted across the ice. When Vegeta turned a corner, he almost lost his balance, but Vegeta kept a firm hold on his hand to keep him steady. “Careful.”

Despite Goku's initial protest, it *was* ironically somehow easier to follow his movements when his eyes were closed. And slowly he began to figure out the movements and pattern himself.

One foot at a time. I can do this…

Vegeta noticed how Goku slowly but surely began to grow more comfortable on the ice, slowly starting to guide him a little less. “There you go, that’s better… Just keep doing what you’re doing, you’re getting the hang of it…”

Opening his eyes, Goku once again took back in his surroundings with a new confidence.

Despite almost stumbling, he managed to stop himself with Vegeta's help.

“Hey. I said to keep your eyes closed, didn’t I?” Vegeta reminded him, a light hint of teasing in his voice.

“I know that, but…” Goku trailed off. His lips parted once more as if he wanted to say something but didn't have the words. Truth be told, Goku didn't know *what* he was saying anymore.

Vegeta looked at him expectantly, watching and waiting to see if he was going to say anything else.

When he didn’t, he spoke instead.

“…You’re doing good.” He took hold of his hand once more. “Follow me.” He encouraged gently, and continued on like before, but at an altered pace.

Goku followed his lead without any complaints, seeming more confident in his movements with Vegeta's assistance.

Vegeta found it strangely endearing to see him trying so hard to keep up, despite his clumsy nature. With a huff, he suddenly twirled him around once.

This completely threw Goku off balance, but he didn’t fall, as Vegeta had a firm grip, and held him back up straight away.

He couldn’t help but let out a smug chuckle at the surprised gasp that escaped from Goku’s lips.

"Vegeta...! Don't do that..." Goku blushed, barely managing to keep his balance.

“What? I was just *spicing things up a bit*... ” He teased him, still keeping hold of his hips to keep him aligned. “You were so go good, I figured you didn’t need me as a crutch anymore.”

“Just warn me next time so I can prepare myself…” Goku tried to keep his focus off his lover's hands that were on his hips.

“And ruin the fun? No way.” Vegeta responded with a smug smirk. “It makes it all the better to watch you scramble around like that.”

He continued to skate along, while one of his hands traveled back to Goku’s waist and suddenly pulled him closer.

“Why are you so mean to me all the time?” Goku mumbled without much bite to it. “You're lucky I put up with you as much as I do.”

Vegeta’s smirk widened a bit at that comment. “Oh, I’m *lucky* now, am I? Don’t get *too* cocky. I can still drop you on your ass if I wanted to.”

"You better not. If you make me fall, I'll pull you down with me..." Goku said, but it was impossible to know whether he was being serious or not.

“Is that a threat or a promise?” Vegeta hummed in response, a smirk still on his face. He let his hand glide further up his side, enjoying the flustered expression on his face. “You know I’d still come out on top either way, though.”

"Yeah, so? That's only cuz I've never skated like this before. If I'd had more time to practice before now, then I'd have no problem challenging you." Goku said simply.

“Ha.” Vegeta snorted in response, clearly not believing that for a second. “In your dreams, maybe.”

"Just wait, you'll see..." Goku said, with an empty threat.

“Oh, I'm looking *forward* to it..” Vegeta drawled in response, sounding almost mocking in his tone.

“…” Goku was quiet for a moment as he looked down at the other Saiyan. "Hey, Vegeta...?”

“Hm? What is it?” Vegeta spoke again, his voice coming out almost like a hum as he looked back at him. He continued to run his hand up and down his chest slowly. He couldn’t help it, it was just so enticing…

"You mind letting me go? I think I've sorta got the hang of this." Goku tried to steady himself.

A flash of surprise came over Vegeta’s expression as Goku spoke, but he didn’t protest.

“You’re pretty confident you’re not going to fall on your ass again, huh?” He let go and watched as Goku tried to keep himself steady. Just as he had expected, he started to fall.

He quickly moved to catch him, grasping onto his side as he let out an amused huff. “What did I tell you, idiot?”

"It's fine, I've got this..." Goku insisted.

Vegeta rolled his eyes. “Oh, really? Because it looks to me like you’re about to land yourself in the ground again. Maybe I should-”

"I said I can do it...! Just let me try again..." Goku doubled down, not wanting to be babied.

Vegeta simply clicked his tongue, releasing the hold on his hip reluctantly. “Fine, go ahead. But if you fall, it’ll be your own fault…”

This time Goku's balance was better than before, and he actually managed to push himself forward.

But he was still having trouble balancing on one foot.

Vegeta watched him with a hint of disbelief, still prepared to catch him in case he fell. When Goku started to shift his weight to one leg, he let out a small scoff. “Not like that… You’re putting your entire weight on one leg. All that's going to do right now is make you fall. Here, just… move your center of gravity onto the other leg…”

He demonstrated with his own body, shifting his weight from one leg to the other.

"But the others are skating on ice with one leg just fine... Why can't I?" Goku retorted.

“Because, dipshit…” Vegeta flicked him on the forehead, causing him to whine. “You’re not an experienced skater yet. You’re not going to be able to just do a trick like that when you’ve only been on the ice for like twenty minutes…”

"Yeah, well... Sometimes challenging yourself is the best way to learn..." Goku rubbed his forehead where Vegeta had flicked him.

“Challenging yourself is different from being stupid. What you’re trying to do here is just going to end with you falling flat on your ass.” Vegeta huffed.

"Yeah, whatever… I know what I'm doing…" Goku grumbled, slowly moving along the ice in spite of him.

"Woah!" All of a sudden, he found himself startled when some guy brushed past him, knocking him back in the process. "Hey! Could you maybe watch where you're going?! That really hurt."

"Sorry!" The man replied, before turning back around again and continuing in his path.

Vegeta sighed and felt a flash of annoyance run through him as he walked over to kneel down next to him. “Are you okay?”

"I'm fine..." Goku sulked, not having made any attempt to get back up.

“You’re not as good at this as you thought, *are* you…?” Vegeta huffed, reaching down to pull him back up on his feet.

“I was doing just *fine* until *he* decided to bump into me…” Goku pouted, looking down.

“Yeah, that guy was a dumbass, but that still doesn’t change the fact that you can’t hold your balance to save your life.” Vegeta replied bluntly. “Look, they have rails over here. Try holding onto them for a while so you can get used to the feeling of walking on the ice.”

“Fine…” Goku reluctantly caved, allowing Vegeta to guide him over to the section of the rink that had the rails, letting go of him once they reached it.

“That’s it. No falling this time, alright?” He told him, crossing his arms.

"Mn..." Goku uttered.

Vegeta stood back to give him some space while he clung onto the rails. “Go on, start moving. Try shifting your weight from side to side, see how that feels.”

Goku did as told, slowly moving along the rails with ease.

Vegeta watched carefully as Goku glided along on the ice with the help of the rails.

He let out a hum of approval, feeling a little impressed. “You’re doing better, just keep going like that.”

Once Goku seemed settled, Vegeta figured he might as well go and skate for himself a bit.

He began to glide over to the middle of the rink, picking up his pace as he went.

Goku watched him, his eyes practically sparkling with fascination. His movements were so smooth, and his posture was… *amazing* .

It was a surprise he could even stay balanced so well considering he was still under the influence of alcohol.

Man, Vegeta's so awesome… I wish I could move like that…

As Vegeta gilded with ease over the ice at a steady pace, he didn’t notice Goku watching his every move like it was some kind of show.

He was too focused on what he was doing, and how much he was enjoying the feeling of the wind, and the ice gliding under his feet. It never got old to him.

As he continued, he let his mind wander, his thoughts turning instead to his lover watching him from the sidelines.

He stole a glance at him, noticing how his eyes seemed to be glued to him with admiration. That thought made his heart skip a beat.

After a moment he started to steer over in his direction, picking up his speed just a bit more.

“Enjoying the view?” He called over to him in a cheeky tone of voice, still gliding across the ice. “You look like a lost puppy staring at me like that.”

“Sorry, it’s just…” Goku turned around and focused his attention back on the rails. “You're too good at this…”

Vegeta took note of Goku’s mumbling with a smirk.

“What’s wrong? You're not feeling jealous are you?” He skated over, and brushed a hand against his shoulder. “I’m sure you’ll get there, eventually.”

“If only there were some way I could…” Goku paused as an idea dawned on him.

He could fly. Maybe he could use his energy to hover, just enough to keep his balance.

Vegeta watched with a raised eyebrow as he felt the spike of energy and Goku pushed himself away from the rails, gliding his way around with ease.

When Goku approached him once more, he didn’t say anything right away, but rather continued to watch him with mild interest.

"Well, I'd be lying if I said I didn't expect you to attempt something stupid like that." He deadpanned once Goku reached him.

"Hey, whatever gets the job done, right...?" Goku wrapped his arms around his shoulders with a smirk.

Vegeta let out a snort of amusement, and placed his own hands on Goku's hips. “Yeah, sure. I guess it’s a good thing you can just cheat using your powers instead.”

"It's not cheating, it's just a head start. That way I can get used to the feeling of walking on the ice a bit first." Goku rationalized, taking Vegeta's hand into his own and intertwining their fingers.

“You’re full of bullshit, you know that?” Vegeta responded, not making any attempt to pull his hand away. His fingers curled around his hand anyway, holding it firmly. The contact felt nice. “Just admit that you couldn't do it without cheating.”

"Maybe," Goku wrapped his other hand around Vegeta's waist, pulling him closer. "For now anyways..."

Vegeta scoffed in response, as Goku pulled him in close to himself. He placed his now free arm on his shoulder with a huff.

“Oh yeah? And how long’s it going to take for you to actually learn for real?” He asked, a hint of amusement in his voice.

“Well, it's not like it can be any worse than learning Super Saiyan Blue, right?” Goku laughed.

Vegeta huffed at the comment. knowing it was true. And that was a far more complicated and intense power to master than something as simple as ice skating.

“Fine, you do have a point, I suppose... But that doesn’t change the fact that you’re being lazy right now.” He responded, giving him a brief squeeze with the arm he had around his waist.

"Oh, come on, it's not that bad, is it? After all, I'm getting to hold you right now, aren't I?" Goku gazed down at the other Saiyan, their lips only inches apart.

“Moron…” Despite his insult, Vegeta couldn’t argue with that. He also didn’t have any complaints about being held by him so close right now either, even if he’d never admit it. He let out a small huff of air, and raised an eyebrow at the lack of space between them. He could feel his stomach fill up with a strange sensation as usual every time they got this close to one another.

"You know you love me..." Goku leaned down further, closing the distance between them.

Normally, Vegeta would have been the one to initiate contact with him, but he found himself caught off guard when it was Goku who did it instead.

Although he was slightly startled at first, he soon melted into the feeling and kissed him back without missing a beat.

For the longest time, the two Saiyans ignored their surroundings, lost in one another and forgetting the other people in the rink.

Vegeta moved his hands up to wrap his arms around Goku's shoulders, gripping firmly at the back of his head as he pushed his lips against his mouth with fervor.

After a moment, Goku nervously allowed him entrance, and although his own movements and response time were sloppy, Vegeta didn't mind it, especially since he was drunk.

It didn't take long for the kiss to grow more heated and passionate. A quiet noise escaped Vegeta's throat, muffled by Goku's lips, as he felt like electricity was shooting through his body.

He was already beginning to feel dizzy, and it wasn't because of the alcohol.

They continued to kiss for what felt like ages, before Vegeta finally broke away, reluctantly, in favor of oxygen.

He took a moment to catch his breath, a small panting gasp escaped him as he tried to regain some normalcy to his breathing. He looked up at Goku with a hazy expression, his face flushed.

In this hazy state, the alcohol coursing through his body giving him some bad ideas, Vegeta suddenly recalled that Bulma had once made him dance with her on the ice before. That's when the thought came to him.

"Hey… Babe…" He spoke after a brief pause, slurring. "Let's dance."

"D-Dance?" Goku stammered. "But I'm *t* -"

"Don't worry, I'll show you, just follow my lead. Like we did at the party." Vegeta reassured him, giving his hand a squeeze.

With his hand in one hand, he slipped his other arm back around his waist again pulling him closer so that their bodies were completely flush against one another.

He started to move his own legs, and tried his best to get the other in sync with him as he began to dance. While his movement was a bit messy and uncoordinated, it was still somewhat steady.

He leaned in close to Goku's ear, and spoke lowly. "Come on, you just have to loosen up and move with me."

As they swayed across the ice, Vegeta moved his body, and in the process, made sure that Goku's body moved along with him.

And, surprisingly, for someone who didn't know how to dance, Goku seemed to be catching on quickly and was managing to follow his movements almost perfectly.

He could feel his heart pounding in his chest rapidly, a combination of the physical activity and being in such close proximity to Goku. The alcohol coursing through his veins and the way he held him close was only making things feel more intense.

They continued dancing like that for a few more moments, and as they did, Vegeta couldn't resist the urge to speak again.

"You're actually doing a decent job for someone who's never danced on the ice before…" His breath fanned against his neck. "Granted you are just cheating…"

Goku acknowledged his statement with a blush but didn't say much outside of that.

Vegeta's mind was becoming hazy with desire and excitement. A part of him was telling him to stop dancing and just take him someplace secluded and far away from everyone.

But the other part of him was telling him to keep going, to have fun while he still could.

So he gave in to the latter.

He decided to get a little more daring. He started to move his body quicker, his movements growing more passionate and frenzied as they continued dancing across the ice.

Goku was startled by his boldness, but tried his best to keep up.

Vegeta dipped his partner down, and pulled him back up, their bodies practically grinding against one another. He felt intoxicated by the presence of the other Saiyan, by the way his body was pressed up against his own.

At that moment, he could barely think straight. His head was spinning, and his skin was on fire as he felt Goku's body against his own.

He continued to lead him through their awkward, yet passionate dance, letting the music and the alcohol guide his movements. Every touch sent a shiver down his spine, and he found himself wanting more.

Vegeta let himself get carried away by the music and the moment as he spun his partner around, twirling him around in one smooth motion.

Goku's head was spinning, his mind consumed by the music and the feel of Vegeta's body against his own. Although he was nervous, he trusted Vegeta not to do anything crazy.

But it was about this point that Vegeta himself started really feeling the effects of the alcohol.

The room swerved around him and he had to still himself, leaning against Goku for support.

“Hey, careful now.” Goku said softly, “We wouldn't want you to fall. We don't we call it quits for today? We can come back here some other time.”

“Yeah, fine…” Vegeta muttered something under his breath, a small scowl forming on his face. But he followed anyway, allowing him to lead him away from the ice.

Goku sat down, pulling off his ice skates at the seat, followed by Vegeta, who was grateful to be off the ice and finally be able to remove his own skates as well.

"Alright. I'm done. I'm gonna bring these back to him." Goku stood up, having pulled his normal shoes back on.

Vegeta stood up and followed him as they set out to return the skates. It was much easier to walk now that he was out of them.

Once they were done, Goku and Vegeta once again found themselves walking down the hallway of the large mall.

As they walked through the store, Vegeta was about to suggest that they start heading back home, when he suddenly noticed Goku's eyes wandering off to the side.

Goku had let his curiosity get the better of him, his eye catching sight of a particular store, one that contained frilly lingerie, as well as a large array of sexual items such as vibrators and dildos. The problem was Goku had no clue that's what they were.

"What is this place...?" Goku asked innocently.

"It's a sex shop, dumbass." Vegeta's voice came out in a low, gravelly tone. He felt his cheeks flush faintly, knowing what kind of things were inside.

“Sex… shop…? As in…?” Goku paused once they were already inside. That's when it dawned on him. An awkward blush spread across his face almost immediately. “Ohhh…”

Vegeta couldn’t help but let out a small snort at the look on his face. Clearly, Goku was still completely clueless.

"Yes. A sex shop. As in, a store full of things for people who want to have sex." He explained, rolling his eyes, his tone still rather sharp and blunt.

Goku laughed, pointing at something. “Hey, look, Vegeta, it's a candy bra.”

Vegeta's eyes widened as he followed Goku's finger, and he felt his face heat up even more as he saw what it was that he was pointing at.

"You idiot, that's not-" He cut himself off, his mouth going dry as the image of Goku wearing such an article of clothing suddenly entered his mind, making his heart race and his blood thump through his veins.

He quickly tried to push the thought away, but it was too late. The image had already been planted in his head.

He took a deep breath, trying to collect himself, and spoke again, his voice coming out a little shakier than usual. "That's not for eating. It's for-"

He couldn't bring himself to say it out loud, his tongue felt like it was tied in a knot.

"For what...? Hold on..." Goku thought it over. "Is this a *kink* ?"

His face turned a bit red as he realized it.

Vegeta stared at him in stunned silence for a moment, his eyes widening. Where the hell had he picked that word up? He was pretty sure he’d never used it before. Hell, he hadn’t even known

Goku *knew* that word.

It took him a moment to regain his bearings, and he sputtered out a reply, his face flushed a deep red.

After a moment of stunned silence, he finally managed to regain his composure, his voice coming out in a hoarse whisper. "Y-yeah... I guess you could call it that. But how the hell do you *know* that word?"

“Kink?” Goku thought it over. “Oh, I think I heard Bulma say it a while back.”

"Tch, of course you heard it from her..." Vegeta mumbled under his breath, rolling his eyes, though the heat in his face didn't diminish any.

He took a deep breath and spoke again, trying to keep his composure. "Just... forget about it, okay? Can we just go now, please?" He asked, his voice coming out a little sharper than intended. “H-Hey!”

His eyes widened when he saw that Goku was already in another part of the store, playing around with a certain object.

"This looks funny." Goku giggled. "What does this thing do, anyways?"

Vegeta's eyes widened even more when he saw what Goku was holding. *Oh, hell no... of all the things he could've picked up...*

He made his way over to him, practically yanking the toy from his hand.

"Don't touch that!" He hissed, his face turning redder by the second.

“Hey, what's your problem? I was only curious…” Goku pouted.

"My problem is that you're an idiot, and you seriously don't know what this is?" Vegeta retorted, his voice still sharp and tense.

He held the toy in his own hands, his cheeks flushed even more. He couldn't believe that he was holding one of those things in his hands, and with Goku's eyes on him.

"No, tell me..." Goku huffed a bit.

Vegeta glanced at Goku, his eyes narrowing slightly. This damn idiot really wanted to know what it was? Why couldn't he just let it go?

"Ugh, fine. Look, all you need to know is it's a-" He paused, his face flushing even more. He took a breath, steeling himself. "It's for pleasure."

"Well, *obviously* ..." Goku said. "I was asking what it does."

"Well..." Vegeta's mind stuttered to a halt for a moment. He took a deep breath, and forced himself to speak.

"It... it vibrates..." His voice came out in a strangled whisper.

Goku blinked, staring at him. "Huh?"

Vegeta's face flushed even more. Could this idiot really be this dense?

"It. V-Vibrates," he repeated, a bit more forcefully, trying to get the point across. "Like... it vibrates against…"

He trailed off, too embarrassed to finish the sentence.

"You know what, just forget about it." He muttered, shoving the toy back onto the display and turning away. His face felt like it was on fire, his heart racing. Why did he have to be so curious all the damn time?

He started walking away, trying to get him away from the display, hoping that would be the end of it.

But of course, Goku wasn't finished yet.

"Yoo, Vegeta, wait!" He called, following after him, but not before grabbing something else.

Vegeta stopped in his tracks and turned to look back at him, his eyes widening when he saw what it was that Goku had picked up this time.

Another vibrator.

His face heated up even more when he realized what it was that he was holding, and his breath hitched.

"Why can't you stop picking stuff up already?! Put that back!" He snapped, his voice coming out in a strangled hiss.

"What? Why?" Goku huffed.

Vegeta's face flushed an even deeper shade of red as he looked at the object, and then back at Goku. "Because I said so, now give it to me!"

He tried to grab it again, but Goku held the toy out of reach.

"Come on, I just wanna know what it is." Goku protested, a stubborn pout on his face.

Vegeta huffed and narrowed his eyes. "Damn it, idiot! You don’t know what you’re messing with!”

He didn't think it was possible, but his face was heating up even more as he stared at the smooth, curved object in Goku's hand.

He could practically hear the sound it would make in his mind, the hum of the vibration against Goku's sensitive skin…

The sound of-

No.

He shook his head, trying to push the thought away.

He didn't want to give Goku the chance to explore the toy, to figure out how it worked... He just knew that he wouldn't be able to hold it together if he did...

But Goku was determined, and he had that stupid curious look in his eye that told Vegeta he wouldn't give up until he got what he wanted.

"Vegeta, just tell me, I'm curious!" Goku protested, holding the toy out of reach again.

An image of using the device on Goku flashed through his alcohol influenced head, and he was quick to tune it out.

Vegeta clenched his jaw, his face flushing, before he spoke, his voice coming out in a strangled whisper.

"It's another vibrator... Now put it up. We're leaving…”

Goku's eyes widened, and a surprised look crossed his face. He looked down at the toy in his hand, and then back up at Vegeta.

"Vibrator...? Another one? You still didn't tell me what the other one does."

Vegeta facepalmed. He realized he was going to have to actually explain this.

"Damn it, you really are clueless…" Vegeta muttered under his breath, taking a moment to control his anger before speaking again.

"Look, there's two types, okay…? One goes inside." He paused, his face flushing even more. "And the other one goes on the outside… Why do I even have to *explain* this…?"

"...Ohhhh, so that's what it is... I noticed they looked a little different." Goku took a moment to process it.

Vegeta exhaled a frustrated breath and pinched the bridge of his nose.

"You finally understand?" He snapped, his patience wearing thin. "Now will you please just put it back?"

He couldn't deal with the thought of Goku holding that damn toy any longer. Just knowing what image it had placed in his mind was enough to drive him crazy, and he was so damn tempted to just rip it from his hand…

"Ugh, fine…" Goku sighed, finally doing as told.

"Great. Now let's go." Vegeta grabbed him by the arm and practically dragged him out of the store, suddenly feeling humiliated for having walked into such a store in the first place.

"Hey, Vegeta, look! It's a karaoke booth!" Goku suddenly smiled, pointing off in the distance.

Vegeta's focus was diverted over to where Goku was pointing.

Sure enough, he could see a karaoke booth, lit up with colorful lights and everything.

"Yeah, I see it..." He grumbled, his mind still preoccupied. “What’s your point?”

"I wanna hear you sing again..." Goku looked at him hopefully.

Vegeta's eyes widened as Goku gazed at him with those big puppy dog eyes. His heart squeezed in his chest as he remembered how much his singing meant to Goku, his innocent expression, his beautiful smile-

Damn him...

How was he supposed to refuse him like this?

"Ugh... fine..." He grumbled, his face heating up again as he spoke. "You get *one song* .”

Goku's face lit up as he eagerly followed behind him, his excitement palpable.

Vegeta exhaled a sigh as the other Saiyan eagerly pulled him inside of the booth with a mischievous grin on his face. He silently hoped that he wouldn't regret this.

The interior of the booth was dimly lit, with cushions on either side. The walls were lined with an array of songs to choose from on a touch screen, which Vegeta immediately begin scanning through.

"I can’t believe you dragged me into this..." He muttered, scrolling through the list of songs.

As he went down the list, he couldn’t help but notice that the vast majority of the songs were love songs or pop ballads. He gritted his teeth in annoyance.

"Damn it," he muttered under his breath. "Why the hell do they only have these stupid songs? *There’s barely anything on here.*

As Vegeta continued scrolling through the song list, his eyes suddenly landed on one that he hadn't noticed before.

All of Me…

His heart began to race, embarassed as he thought about singing such song for Goku. It made his chest tighten.

He looked over at the other Saiyan, who was staring at him with wide-eyed anticipation.

"W-Why are you looking at me like that?" He snapped, a bit defensively.

Goku just smiled at him, his gaze filled with warmth and affection. "Nothing... I'm just excited to hear you sing again..."

Vegeta let out a huff, trying to hide his embarrassment. His heart squeezed again, and he quickly looked away, his face heating up. "...Yeah, yeah, whatever… I'm only doing this because you won’t shut up about it…"

He turned back to the screen. "Alright, I found one."

Goku's eyes lit up when he heard Vegeta's words.

"Oh, what'd you pick? Let me see!" He was practically bouncing in his seat.

"No." Vegeta said, blunty. "You'll just have to wait until I sing it."

“Mmmm?” Goku pouted at him, clearly not happy with having to wait.

"Stop being so impatient." Vegeta rolled his eyes. "It's just a song. It's not like it'll kill you to have to wait a moment.”

"Ugh, Fine," Goku resigned himself to sitting back and sulking on the cushion.

Vegeta couldn't help but be amused by his childish behavior.

With a huff, he selected the song and waited for the music to start.

He took a deep breath, mentally preparing himself. He was actually looking forward to this now. Despite the things Atticus had made him do, Goku was the one person he actually wanted to sing to, and the adrenaline coursing through him was almost addictive.

The first few lyrics began, and the words were just as cheesy as he remembered. He took a deep breath in, the music practically pumping through his veins.

“What would I do without your smart mouth?”

“Drawing me in, and you kicking me out.”

“You've got my head spinning, no kidding, I can't pin you down.”

“What's going on in that beautiful mind?”

“I'm on your magical mystery ride.”

“And I'm so dizzy, don't know what hit me, but I'll be alright.”

“My head's under water…”

“But I'm breathing fine.”

“You're crazy and I'm out of my mind…”

The music played through the speakers, and Vegeta's voice rang loud and clear as he sang.

At first, he sounded rough and angry, but there was an underlying emotion that slowly came through in his voice. His face was flushed, his eyes closed as he got lost in the words of the song.

Goku sat there watching, his eyes wide and filled with emotion. He was captivated by Vegeta's performance, and the raw power of his voice.

Vegeta’s tone was rough, but there was a subtle vulnerability in it.

Vegeta took a deep breath as the words spilled from his lips. He tried to ignore the nerves and the butterflies in his stomach, focusing on the song and the words he was singing. His voice was strong and steady, confident in its delivery.

“'Cause all of me…”

“Loves all of you…”

Goku's heart skipped a beat as Vegeta approached, the other man's hand gently touching his neck and trailing down to his chest.

His eyes widened in surprise, his cheeks flushing a deep shade of red.

"Love your curves and all your edges…"

Vegeta pulled him up into his arms, so they were almost chest to chest, the emotion in his voice growing with each word.

"All your perfect imperfections..."

Vegeta brought Goku's wrist to his lips, gently brushed them against the scars on his wrist.

A shiver ran down Goku's spine. The gesture was so tender, so caring.

"Give your all to me…"

"I'll give my all to you."

"You're my end and my beginning."

"Even when I lose, I'm winning."

Vegeta gazed into his eyes, which were shining with love and devotion.

He could practically see the adoration in them, and it caused his chest to flutter, but he couldn't stop the words from flowing out.

"'Cause I give you all of me."

“And you give me all of you, oh-oh.”

He pulled Goku even closer, pressing their bodies more firmly together, and sang the next words more intimately, like a vow.

Goku’s chest stung when he heard what he was saying. The affection Vegeta was showing him moved him. Before he knew it, there were tears falling from his eyes.

I'm crying... No, not again...

He mentally cursed himself. He couldn't stop it.

Vegeta reached up, wiping them away.

"How many times do I have to tell you?"

"Even when you're crying, you're beautiful too."

"The world is beating you down, I'm around through every mood…”

Vegeta's voice was firm and yet gentle, his eyes locked on Goku's face, trying to soothe him, trying to tell him that he wasn't going anywhere.

“You're my downfall, you're my muse.”

“My worst distraction, my rhythm and blues.”

“I can't stop singing, it's ringing in my head for you.”

He could feel the heat radiating from his skin, and the steady thump of his heartbeat. He continued to sing, his voice like a gentle caress, his lyrics a declaration of his love for Goku.

"My head's under water, but I'm breathing fine."

"You're crazy and I'm out of my mind…"

Vegeta's arms wrapped around Goku's shoulder, holding him close, almost protectively. His voice was still rough and deep, but it had softened, and there was an underlying sweetness in his tone.

He could feel the emotions coursing through him, and he wanted to let them out.

"Cause all of me…"

"Loves all of you..."

"Love your curves and all your edges."

"All your perfect imperfections."

He leaned in closer, his forehead resting against Goku's, his breath warm against his skin.

"Give your all to me…"

"I'll give my all to you."

"You're my end and my beginning…"

He could feel Goku clutching onto him, his fingers desperately grasping onto his shirt. Vegeta's heart ached with love and adoration, he wanted to hold him forever.

He sang the next words softly, the sound coming out almost as a whisper.

"Even when I lose, I'm winning..."

His eyes were still on Goku's face, trying to read his reaction, as if he hadn't already said these things so many times before, as if he didn't already know how Goku felt about him.

"Cause I give you all of me..."

"And you give me all of you..."

“Give me all of you, oh…”

Vegeta could see the emotions flickering in those dark eyes, could feel the trembling of his body.

He wanted to soothe him, to reassure him.

He cupped his face in his hand, his thumb gently caressing his cheek.

"Cards on the table, we're both showing hearts…”

"Risking it all, though it's hard."

His voice grew even more intimate, the words no short of a confession.

"Cause all of me loves all of you..."

"Love your curves and all your edges..."

"All your perfect imperfections..."

"Give your all to me..."

"I'll give my all to you…"

"You're my end and my beginning, even when I lose, I'm winning..."

"Cause I give you all of me..."

"And you give me all of you…"

Without much hesitation, he pressed his lips against Goku's. He could feel him respond almost immediately, his lips parting under his own, his body pressing closer.

"I give you all… of me…"

"And you give me all… of you, oh-oh…"

Vegeta breathed into the kiss, his mouth moving hungrily against Goku's. He could feel the heat and sweetness of his tongue, the shiver that ran through his body, the faintest hint of a moan that escaped his lips…

He pulled Goku tighter against him, his hands roaming over the curves and muscles of his body. He could feel his own body responding, the heat building in his stomach.

He continued to kiss him senseless, his lips and tongue exploring every inch of his mouth, mapping out the familiar planes of his body, memorizing every gasp, every shiver.

They broke apart after a moment, both of them panting and flushed. Goku's eyes were dark with desire, his hands still clutching at Vegeta's clothes, as if he couldn't bear to let him go.

Vegeta's heart was still racing, the adrenaline from the kiss making his head spin. He took in the sight of Goku, his lips red and kiss-swollen, his hair unruly, his chest heaving…

“...You want me to sing another one…?” he ran a hand across his cheek, sensing he still wanted to hear more.

Goku's eyes widened, his breath coming out in a ragged exhale.

"Yes..." He whispered, his voice low and rough with emotion. "Yes, please… You'd… really do that…?”

Vegeta's heart skipped a beat at the plea, the raw need in his voice.

Goku looked down with a bit of guilt. “You don't have to, you know… I know singing is hard for you, sometimes…”

“Please… There's nobody in this universe I want to sing to more right now than you, Kakarot…” Vegeta smiled softly, wiping some stray strands of his hair away.

“Vegeta…” Goku’s heart fluttered at hearing that, avoiding his gaze.

The intensity in Goku's voice was more than enough to convince Vegeta. He wanted to make him feel loved, wanted to show him that he would do anything for him. Especially if singing for him was what he wanted.

After moving back and picking another song from the karaoke machine, he took a deep breath, steadying himself. He was a little nervous, not wanting to mess up in front of Goku of all people. But the way he looked at him, those dark eyes burning with love and awe... he just couldn't refuse.

After the music started he began to sing, letting the words flow out of him like a gentle stream. His voice was a little shaky at first, but as he got into it, it grew steadier, more confident.

“Should've stayed, were there signs… I ignored?”

“Can I help you, not to hurt, anymore?”

“We saw brilliance, when the world, was asleep.”

“There are things that we can have, but can't keep…”

He glanced at Goku, who was listening silently, his eyes wide. The intensity in his gaze was almost too much, but Vegeta pushed on. He closed his eyes, focusing on the lyrics, trying to let them come from the core of his being.

"If they say…"

"Who cares if one more light goes out?"

"In the sky of a million stars…"

"It flickers, flickers…"

"Who cares when someone's time runs out?"

"If a moment is all we are…"

"We're quicker, quicker."

"Who cares if one more light goes out?"

"Well I do…"

He could feel the emotions welling up in his chest, as he sang, remembering all the times that Goku had questioned his own value in the world. He couldn't bear the thought of Goku feeling like no one cared if he was gone.

"The reminders pull the floor from your feet…"

"In the kitchen, one more chair than you need…"

His eyes flicked over to Goku again, catching the expression of wonder and adoration on his face, and his heart fluttered in response.

He swallowed hard, his heart clenching in his chest. He couldn't imagine a life without him in it, sitting at his dinner table, teasing him over food, or laughing with him on the couch.

All those years that Goku had been gone from the world… Just thinking about it tore him apart .

He couldn't bear for that to happen again.

He looked into Goku's eyes, urging him to understand, to feel his love for him through the music.

"And you're angry, and you should be, it's not fair..."

"Just 'cause you can't see it, doesn't mean it isn't there…"

He could see the tears gathering in Goku's eyes, the vulnerability etched on his face. He stepped closer, closing the distance between them to kiss him only briefly, his voice dropping to a whisper as he continued to sing.

"If they say…"

"Who cares if one more light goes out? In the sky of a million stars…"

"It flickers, flickers…"

"Who cares when someone's time runs out?"

"If a moment is all we are…"

"We're quicker, quicker"

"Who cares if one more light goes out?"

"Well, I do."

He reached out, touching Goku's face, his thumb gently tracing his cheek. He could see the anguish in his eyes, the pain and hurt that he tried so hard to hide.

He wished he could take it away, could heal all his emotional wounds. All he could do was tell him the truth, and hope that he would believe it.

"Who cares if one more light goes out?"

“In the sky of a million stars…”

“It flickers, flickers…”

“Who cares when someone's time runs out?”

“If a moment is all we are…”

“We're quicker, quicker…”

“Who cares if one more light goes out?”

“Well I do…”

“Well I do…”

For a moment, the only sound in the room was Vegeta’s labored breathing. His heart was still racing, his hands shaking. And the look on Goku's face… It was almost too much to handle. “How was I…?”

His eyes were wide, his cheeks damp with tears. He blinked a few times as he tried to find the right words. Finally, Goku spoke, his voice choked with emotion. "You were... amazing, Vegeta… Your voice is so pretty…”

“You always say that…” Vegeta looked away, but he couldn't deny the small surge of pride he felt at being praised for his singing.

"...I wanna sing something to you too..." Goku said, a bit shyly.

Vegeta raised an eyebrow, surprised and intrigued by Goku's confession. "You want to sing to me?"

He wasn't sure what to make of it, but he was curious.

"Alright, go ahead then. I'm listening," He crossed his arms over his chest.

Goku leaned back, a mischievous gleam in his eyes. "Alright, but you gotta promise not to laugh though."

Vegeta rolled his eyes. "Please, like I would ever laugh at you for singing,"

Goku fiddled with the screen, trying to find the right song.

Vegeta watched him, still curious and a bit skeptical. The idea of Goku singing to him was a little unusual, to say the least.

Finally, after a moment of searching, Goku seemed to find what he was looking for. The music started playing, a soft and slow instrumental piece.

"You're picking something slow and boring...?" Vegeta teased, leaning against the wall. He expected Goku to choose something more upbeat and energetic, but it seemed he was going for something more emotional instead.

"Shh, just listen..." Goku glanced at him.

Vegeta rolled his eyes, but he stayed quiet, waiting patiently for Goku to start singing.

"You put all your faith in my dreams..."

"You gave me the world that I wanted..."

"What did I do to deserve you?"

Goku's voice was soft and steady, his eyes still closed as he sang. Vegeta's heart skipped a beat at the sound, his breath catching in his throat.

He'd never heard Goku sing this beautifully before, the raw emotion and vulnerability in his voice making his chest flutter.

"I follow your steps with my feet..."

"I walk on the road that you started..."

"I need you to know that I heard you…"

"Every word.."

Goku opened his eyes for a moment, looking at Vegeta almost shyly, before focusing back on the lyrics.

Vegeta watched him silently, his heart swelling with love and admiration. He had never seen Goku so open and vulnerable, so willing to bare his heart through a song like this.

"I've waited way too long to say…"

"Everything you mean to me..."

"In case you don't live forever, let me tell you now..."

"I love you more than you'll ever wrap your head around..."

"In case you don't live forever, let me tell you the truth..."

"I'm everything that I am because of you..."

At Goku repeated the words, his voice hitched slightly, as if he was fighting down the emotions and nerves that threatened to overwhelm him.

Vegeta felt his throat tighten as he listened, his heart aching with love for the man standing in front of him. He wanted to reach out and touch him, hold him, but he didn't want to break the spell. Just listening to Goku sing to him was… perfect.

He closed his eyes, letting the words wash over him, feeling the love and admiration in every syllable. His heart was aching, his body tingling with a mix of love and longing.

“I, I've carried this song in my mind.”

“Listen, it's echoing in me.”

“But I haven't helped you to hear it…”

“We, we've only got so much time

I'm pretty sure it would kill me…”

“If you didn't know the pieces of me are pieces of you…”

Goku's voice grew stronger with each note. He was singing with such passion and conviction that even Vegeta couldn't help but be moved by it.

He was giving him part of himself, laying bare his soul through the music..

"I've waited way too long to say..."

"Everything you mean to me

In case you don't live forever, let me tell you now..."

"I love you more than you'll ever wrap your head around."

"In case you don't live forever, let me tell you the truth..."

"I'm everything that I am because of you."

"I have a hero whenever I need one..."

"I just look up to you and I see one..."

"I'm a man 'cause you taught me to be one."

Vegeta opened his eyes, his heart pounding in his chest. Hearing Goku sing that song... it was more than he ever hoped or dreamed of. But the look in his eyes, the way he was looking at him... it made his stomach twist with a mixture of anticipation and anxiety.

"In case you don't live forever, let me tell you now..."

"I love you more than you'll ever wrap your head around..."

"In case you don't live forever, let me tell you the truth..."

"I'm everything that I am..."

"Whoa, woah..."

"Whoa, woah..."

"In case you don't live forever, let me tell you the truth..."

"As long as I'm here as I am, so are you…"

The music faded out, leaving the room silent.

Goku stood there, his cheeks flushed, his eyes still locked on Vegeta's.

He was breathing heavily, as if singing took more energy than any battle he had ever fought.

Vegeta sat there for a moment, his heart racing, his mind still trying to process what he had just heard. He wanted to say something, anything, but his voice wasn't cooperating.

"So... how was it?" He asked, his voice slightly shaky. He wasn't a terrible singer, sure, but he knew he was nowhere near as good as Vegeta was. Still, he had wanted to try. For Vegeta. "Was it as bad as I thought it was?"

"No, it was... fine, I guess…" Vegeta was still reeling from the power of Goku's performance. Truth was, his voice was softer than Vegeta's, but the power and passion in his voice was undeniable. "Even though you sound like a woman."

He wasn't complaining of course. It had a charm of its own, even though his tone lacked confidence.

“What? I do *not*... ” Goku feigned a small glare.

Vegeta chuckled, enjoying how easy it was to rile Goku up. "Oh, come on, you can't deny it," he teased, leaning back against the cushions of the Karaoke booth. Your voice does sound a bit feminine, compared to mine…"

When Goku puffed his cheeks out in response, Vegeta's lips curled into another smirk, enjoying how adorable Goku looked when he was annoyed.

He reached out and gently patted Goku's cheek. "Don't be that way… It's not my fault that you sound like a princess.”

"H-Hey, don't call me that... I'm not a princess..." Goku immediately turned his head away, flushing in embarrassment.

"You're *not* , huh?" Vegeta teased, stepping even closer to him, enjoying how flustered Goku was getting. He couldn't help but find it amusing, how easy it was to get a rise out of his lover. "Well, you could have fooled me…”

"What's *that* supposed to mean...?" Goku huffed.

"You know exactly what I mean…” Vegeta smirked, pulling Goku down to sit on his lap, enjoying the feeling of him straddling his legs. He wrapped his arms around Goku's waist, pulling him closer. “You’re too soft, Kakarot…, and far too easy to tease. You’re practically *begging* to be called a princess.”

"I can get feisty too when I want, you know..." Goku retorted pridefully, snuffing his nose at him.

"Hmph, is that so?” Vegeta raised an eyebrow in a mock challenge. He tightened his grip on Goku's waist, feeling the heat and firmness of his body beneath his hands. He leaned in, his voice dropping to a low, seductive murmur. "Show me then… *princess* .”

Hearing the challenge, Goku reached up, pressing a hand against his neck, giving a small squeeze, but not enough to cause any damage. But that's when he noticed a man from outside of the booth that was giving them a strange look.

*What's **his** problem…?*

“Oh, getting daring now, are we?” Vegeta's smirk faded when he noticed Goku seemed distracted. “What's wrong?”

He turned to see what Goku was looking at and he too noticed the man staring at them.

Vegeta's gaze flicked to the man watching them, and a wave of irritation washed over him. He didn't like being judged by someone he didn't even know.

Goku looked down, a bit. “Could we maybe go home now?”

"Yeah…” Although the feeling of Goku's hand on his throat was somehow nice, Vegeta agreed. “Let's get out of here.”

He helped Goku off his lap and stood up, briefly taking a moment to pay while keeping a possessive hand on the small of his back as they exited the booth.

As they walked out of the Karaoke booth and back into another section of the mall, Vegeta kept a watchful eye on the man who had been staring at them. He could feel the judgmental eyes on them as they walked, and he had the sudden urge to tell the man to mind his own business. But he didn't want to cause a scene.

He turned his focus to Goku, making sure he was alright.

"Ignore him," he whispered, his voice low and calming. "He's not worth our time.”

"I know…" Goku muttered under his breath, his eyes darting to the side.

He tried to brush it off, focusing on Vegeta’s touch. But he couldn’t ignore the uncomfortable feeling the man’s gaze was giving him.

Vegeta's grip on Goku’s waist tightened slightly as they walked out of the mall.

Once they were outside, Vegeta felt a sense of relief wash over him. He was itching to get home, to be in the privacy and safety of their own home where he didn't have to worry about judgmental gazes and nosy strangers.

He guided Goku towards the parking lot, his stride purposeful and determined.

As Vegeta approached the driver's side of the car, Goku stopped him. “Vegeta, wait..."

Vegeta turned to look at Goku, puzzled by the request. He was eager to get going, but the expression on Goku's face stopped him.

"What is it?” He asked, his voice soft as he faced his lover.

“I think I should probably drive this time…” Goku said. “You're kinda super drunk right now…”

Vegeta huffed, feigning indignation at the remark.

"I am *not 'super drunk'*... I can drive just fine," he protested, trying to maintain his composure. But deep down, he knew Goku was right. He could feel the alcohol sloshing around in his stomach, the world spinning slightly around him. Perhaps letting him drive was a bad idea. “Besides, you don’t even have your license on you…”

“They can look me up if they have to. It’s better than getting into an accident and wrecking the car." Goku folded his arms, putting his foot down. "It’s either that or I’m carrying you back home myself.”

Vegeta was briefly annoyed by the threat of being carried home, but he knew there was no way he'd win this argument. Especially not in his current state.

"Fine..., but if you scratch my car, I'll kill you…" He muttered with resignation and Goku let out a small sigh of relief when he started to walk past him. However, when he almost stumbled, Goku had to catch him.

"Be careful. Let me help you…" Goku scolded him lightly, leading him over to the passenger's side of the car.

"I can get around just fine on my own, damn it…" Vegeta protested in embarrassment, but as he stumbled again, almost losing his balance, he begrudgingly let Goku help him inside. "You don't have to fuss over me like I'm an old man…"

Goku helped him sit in the car, trying to hide a small chuckle at his lover's stubbornness. He knew how hard it was for him to accept help.

"You say that, but you're about as steady on your feet as a newborn deer right now," he teased, fastening Vegeta's seatbelt. "Just sit back and relax. I've got this."

Vegeta huffed, feeling a mixture of annoyance and embarrassment as Goku buckled his seatbelt like he was a child. But the way Goku took charge, the firm yet gentle way he handled him, it was both irritating and endearing at the same time.

"I don't need you to take care of me," he muttered under his breath, his ego taking a ding in the situation as he leaned back against the car seat, reluctantly resigning to trusting Goku's driving.

As soon as he was inside, he leaned back in the seat and closed his eyes, feeling the alcohol begin to take its toll. His head was spinning, and he knew that it wouldn't be long before he started nodding off.

"Yeah, yeah. I know…" Goku smirked, knowing that Vegeta's pride was hurt. He couldn't help but enjoy this moment a bit, having the upper hand for once.

He closed the car door and walked back over to the driver's side, getting in and adjusting the seat and mirrors, as well as plugging the address into the GPS.

"Listen, if you start to feel sick or anything, I want you to tell me so I can pull over the car, okay? I don't want you to throw up on yourself." Goku said.

Vegeta rolled his eyes but nodded grudgingly in agreement. "Whatever, I know the drill. But I'm not some lightweight. I can handle my alcohol just fine."

"That was a lot of sake, Vegeta…" Goku glanced away. "Even for you."

He hadn't wanted to address too much concern over it, but he was.

Vegeta grumbled under his breath, not wanting to admit that Goku was right and even his own pride couldn't deny the effect it was having on him.

"Fine…" He muttered, folding his arms across his chest. "I'll let you know if I start feeling nauseous. Happy now?"

Goku gave him a satisfied nod in response, a small smirk tugging at the corner of his lips.

The drive home was mostly silent, the only sound being the hum of the car engine and the soft music playing on the radio.

Goku glanced over at Vegeta every now and then. Despite his grumpy demeanor, he looked… adorable. His eyes were half-lidded, his cheeks flushed, his usual scowl softened by the effects of the alcohol.

Vegeta had tried to stay awake, but the alcohol and Goku's smooth driving soon lulled him into a hazy half-consciousness. He slouched down in the seat, his eyes still closed, but his mind drifting into a drowsy state.

The rest of the ride was a blur to him, the only thing he could focus on being the soft hum of the engine and the gentle movement of the car.

Vegeta was on the verge of falling asleep when he suddenly felt the car come to a stop. The sudden absence of movement jolted him back to semi-awareness, his eyes slowly fluttering open.

He blinked a few times, trying to clear the fog from his brain. As his vision came into focus, he saw that they were in the familiar surroundings of their driveway, the house looming in the darkness.

He let out a small sigh, feeling a mixture of relief and annoyance at being woken up. He was just starting to get comfortable, dammit.

Goku turned off the car and turned to look at him. “All right, we’re here. Do you think you can walk on your own this time?”

“I'm not a child, you know…” Vegeta shot him a glare, his stubbornness kicking in even in his drunken state, although his words were slurred and belied his claim. “Just give me a second…”

He tried to get out of the car, but as he stood up, he swayed unsteadily on his feet. He cursed silently to himself, realizing he was a lot more intoxicated than he thought.

He leaned against the car for support, attempting to get his bearings.

He took a deep breath, trying to steady himself. But the world around him was tilting and spinning. He tried to walk, but his legs felt unstable and clumsy. He stumbled forward a few steps before almost losing his balance completely.

“Take it easy, you can barely stand right now.” Goku was already by his side before he knew it, catching him so he wouldn't fall. “Come here. I’m lifting you up.”

“H-Hey…!” Vegeta growled a small protest when Goku scooped him up in his arms. After a moment, he reluctantly leaned against his boyfriend’s chest, allowing him to carry him into the house. “You, idiot… You just wanted an excuse to carry me, didn't you…?”

“Maybe…” Goku admitted as he entered the bedroom, bringing Vegeta over to the bed and laying him down.

As Goku shifted him around so he would be more comfortable, Vegeta groaned lightly, closing his eyes. His head was spinning as he attempted to fight off a wave of nausea.

He felt the bed dip as Goku sat down beside him, a warm and comforting presence. He opened one eye to look up at his lover, seeing the concern and affection in Goku's gaze.

Vegeta tried to sit up slightly, wanting to prove that he was fine. But as he did, his stomach began lurching uncomfortably. He let out a small gasp, his face paling as he fell back against the pillows.

“Hey, Shh…” Goku reached out to rub soothing circles on his chest. “Try not to move too much right. Just relax.”

Vegeta obeyed, closing his eyes again and fighting back the urge to vomit. He hated feeling so weak and vulnerable, but the dizziness made it impossible to do anything else.

“Do you need me to get you some water or something?” Goku asked, concern evident in his voice.

“No, I'm fine...” Vegeta muttered, still trying to maintain some semblance of pride. He knew he was far from fine, but he refused to admit it aloud.

Goku, however, could see straight through his boyfriend's tough exterior. “You sure? You look like you’re about to throw up…”

“I said I'm *fine* , dammit,” Vegeta managed to spit out, trying to sound as grumpy and defiant as ever.

“Uh huh," Goku wasn't buying it. “That’s why you’re lying there looking pale as a ghost, and on the verge of puking your guts out.”

Vegeta closed his eyes again, feeling the room spin around him. The nausea was becoming more intense, and it was hard to concentrate on anything other than keeping his stomach contents down.

Goku's eyes softened and he leaned closer. “Just let me take care of you, okay? You don’t have to be such a tough guy all the time. Here, try and take some deep breaths.”

Vegeta took a few shuddering breaths, trying to focus on the feeling of Goku's hand against his chest. The cool touch was somewhat soothing, but it didn’t quite quell the nausea that was building inside of him.

"Do you want me to get the trash can?" Goku offered.

Vegeta nodded weakly, his stomach clenching ominously. "Yeah... yeah, just in case..."

He didn't want to puke in front of Goku, but he knew he was teetering on the edge right now.

Goku quickly sprang into action, grabbing the trash can from the corner of the room and placing it next to the bed. He then returned to Vegeta's side, rubbing his arm as he waited for the worst to happen.

Vegeta took another shuddering breath, his knuckles turning white as he gripped the sheets tightly. The nausea was getting stronger, and he could feel the bile rising in his throat.

He closed his eyes, willing himself not to throw up, but he knew it was a losing battle.

After a few moments, the inevitable happened. Vegeta’s body convulsed, and he leaned over the trash can, vomiting violently and choking. His entire body shook as he emptied his stomach. It was an unpleasant and humiliating experience, but he couldn’t stop.

Goku winced at the sound of it, his heart clenching in sympathy. He rubbed his back, trying to offer what comfort he could.

Vegeta had rarely ever drank that much, so this was the first times he had seen him throw up because of it.

He wished he could do more for him, but he knew he couldn't. There was nothing he could do except stay by his side.

When the vomiting finally subsided, Goku gently wiped Vegeta's face with a rag that was on the dresser. "You feeling any better?"

"No. Not really," Vegeta croaked, his voice hoarse and raw from the strain. He groaned weakly, his head still spinning and his stomach churning.

He felt like complete crap, weak and exhausted. He just wanted it all to be over.

"Well, at least you got it all out." Goku continued to clean up Vegeta's face, gently wiping the vomit from his skin.

Vegeta closed his eyes once again, trying to block out the taste of bile in his mouth. He would never admit it, but down deep, he appreciated having Goku there with him, taking care of him even when he was at his most vulnerable.

Goku finished cleaning him up and set the cloth aside. "You think you'll be okay if I go get you some water?"

Vegeta grunted in assent. He just wanted something to wash away the taste of vomit in his mouth.

He opened his eyes just enough to watch Goku stand up and leave the room, his form blurry and indistinct.

While Goku was gone, Vegeta tried to take stock of how he was feeling. He then realized that his stomach was at least somewhat settled now that he had purged himself of the contents, but his mind

was still fuzzy.

He closed his eyes again, listening for any sign of Goku's return.

After a few minutes, Vegeta heard the sound of footsteps coming back into the room. He blinked and saw Goku walking towards the bed, a glass of water in his hand.

Goku sat down beside him and offered him the glass. "Here, drink some of this. It'll help get the taste out of your mouth."

Vegeta sat up and took the glass with a shaky hand, taking small sips of the cool water. It felt soothing on his raw throat, and he relished the way it washed away the bitter taste of vomit.

He handed the glass back to Goku, feeling slightly less nauseous now.

Goku set the glass of water on the nightstand and turned back to Vegeta. "You think you can lay down now? You look like you could use some rest."

Vegeta was simply exhausted to protest. He carefully laid down on the bed, letting out a small sigh as his head hit the pillow.

The room continued to spin around him, but at least the nausea had subsided for the most part. He closed his eyes, trying to let his nerves calm down.

Goku took some time to replace the trash bag with another, having brought the old one into the kitchen and tied it up before returning to Vegeta's side.

The bed shifted underneath him as he wrapped an arm around the other Saiyan, pulling him close. He knew that Vegeta wouldn't want to be babied too much, but he couldn't help but feel protective of him in this vulnerable state.

He gently stroked Vegeta's hair, his touch light and soothing.

Vegeta didn’t pull away from the embrace, allowing himself to be held by Goku. The dizziness and exhaustion had left him feeling too weak to resist.

"Try and get some rest," Goku said softly, continuing to caress his hair. "You’ll probably feel better by tonight."

Vegeta grunted in response, already feeling the pull of sleep.

Goku watched as Vegeta slowly relaxed, his breathing evening out as he began to drift into sleep.

He continued to lay beside him, gently stroking his hair and mumbling soothing words until Vegeta was fully asleep.

Even then, he continued, feeling the softness of each strand. He loved having access to this side of Vegeta, the one that was vulnerable and in need of care. It was a rare glimpse into the real him, the one behind the tough exterior he put up for the rest of the world.

Goku knew that Vegeta would likely be pissed when he woke up and realized how much of a mess he had made of himself, but he loved Vegeta more than anything, and he would do anything to take care of him.

He gently traced his fingers along his cheek, marveling at how soft his skin felt.

As he continued to caress Vegeta's face, he thought about their relationship and how far they had come. They had started out as enemies, constantly trying to outdo each other, especially Vegeta. But now they were partners, lovers even.

Goku had never expected things to turn out this way, but he was glad that they had. Despite Vegeta's stubborn and prideful personality, he couldn't help but be drawn to him. He was strong, smart, and now fiercely loyal to those he cared about.

But Goku knew that deep down, underneath all that hard exterior, Vegeta was also vulnerable and emotional. He was just as capable of feeling pain and hurt as anyone else, but he never let anyone see those emotions. He had been taught from a young age that as a Saiyan, he was supposed to be tough and fearless.

He had been so used to being independent and self-sufficient that it must have taken a lot for him to finally let his guard down around others.

Goku wanted to show him that it was okay to let someone take care of him. He wanted to show him that it wasn't a weakness… That it wasn't something to be ashamed of.

As he continued to gaze at his boyfriend, Goku's mind started to wander as he found himself thinking back to the events of the day, memories he hadn't wanted to relive flowing through his head all over again.

The disgusted looks of that man at the mall, most likely judging him for liking another man. It reminded him of people at Capsule Corp. At the festival.

Goku tried to tell himself that it didn't matter what those people thought of him, that their opinions didn't define his worth.

That there was nothing wrong with it.

But it was hard to convince himself of that.

The scars on his wrist suddenly burned for some reason, the constant reminder of his weakness and failures.

He could feel his own self-consciousness growing, the weight of the memories bearing down on him.

With the memories from the festival came many things.

And having to be saved and protected, not just from the guy at the festival, but from Atticus as well, who had put Vegeta through hell. An attestment to just how badly he had failed both him and himself.

He should have been stronger. But instead let fear control him, something he had never done before.

And in that moment, the sight of Vegeta naked, Atticus on top of him flashed through his head as it had so many times before.

Just knowing it had been going on for *weeks without him being aware of it* was too much to stomach.

He felt a lump form in his throat, his heart clenching in his chest. He hated how weak he had been, how easily he had been overpowered. Not just overpowered, but walked over, and manipulated.

By people like ***Allan*** .

How could he be strong enough to protect the ones he loved if he couldn't even protect *himself* ?

As the thoughts grew darker and darker, Goku's tail scar began to ache again, just like before, the weight of it was almost unbearable. His spine was tingling.

Fear began to creep up on him. Fear that if he didn't hurry up and get stronger soon then Vegeta would lose interest in him or something bad would happen and he wouldn't be able to stop it.

A wave of self-doubt and shame washed over him, anxiety eating away at his stomach as his mind became plagued by images that would never go away.

He tried to focus on the sleeping form of his lover beside him, but it was too difficult, he'd rather just disappear.

He had let him down so many times he had lost count, yet Vegeta had done so much for him. How long until he got tired of it? Of pulling all the weight and getting nothing in return?

His throat felt tight and raw, and he could feel tears threatening to well up in his eyes. Goku didn't want to cry, but he was struggling to hold it back.

He looked at Vegeta, feeling a mixture of love and self-pity. He wanted to reach out and touch him, to hold him close and tell him everything would be okay.

And more than that. He wanted to lean on him, to seek comfort in his presence.

But how could he do that? How could he ask for Vegeta's comfort and support when he wasn't strong enough to provide it in return?

Goku tried to tell himself that he was just being ridiculous, that he was overthinking things. But the thoughts wouldn't stop. They just kept coming, over and over again, like a broken record playing in his head.

Maybe he was expecting too much of Vegeta. Maybe he had just been burdening him all along. He should be stronger than this. He should be able to handle these thoughts and feelings on his own.

But instead, here he was, struggling to keep it together, just as he had so many other times.

He tried to take a deep breath, to calm himself down. But it was no use. The thoughts were just too loud.

He knew that he should probably wake Vegeta up and talk to him about what was going on in his head, but he didn't want to bother him.

Besides, Vegeta needed his rest. He couldn't bother him every time he had a crisis of confidence. He could handle it on his own.

But even as he thought that, he knew deep down that it was a lie. The truth was, he *couldn't* handle it on his own. If he could, the scars on his wrist wouldn't exist.

He looked at Vegeta again, his chest feeling tight with emotion.

Vegeta was so strong. He was everything that Goku *wasn't* . Fierce, and confident. The man who had acted as his rock and pillar for the past couple years.

Goku knew that he should be grateful to have someone as talented and powerful as Vegeta by his side, but all he could focus on was his own weakness and inadequacy.

Goku felt a wave of frustration wash over him. He wanted to be better, to be stronger. He didn't want to be the weak one in need of protection anymore.

He wanted to be like him, to be able to stand tall in the face of any challenge.

It was maddening. He knew he was capable of so much more. He had been through so much, survived so many impossible situations. And yet, here he was, still feeling like the same weak kid he had been decades ago, back when he was holding his dead grandfather in his arms, or Krillin twice or even how he had felt when he found out from Korin that Roshi had died fighting King Piccolo.

Powerless.

The sight of Vegeta’s body. The bruises.

His tears.

His nightmares.

He finally let out a shaky breath, walking over to the desk and grabbing his journal.

Maybe writing things down would help him clear his head. Maybe putting his thoughts out on paper would allow him to see them more rationally, and make them easier to deal with.

He sat down and opened it to a blank page. He stared at it, not knowing where to begin.

His thoughts were a mess, a tangled web of emotions and memories. He didn't know how to untangle it all, how to make sense of it all.

He took a deep breath, trying to calm himself down. He needed to focus, to sort through his thoughts and figure out what was going on in his head.

He looked down at the paper, and started writing, putting down whatever came to him first.

I feel so weak right now. I'm not strong enough... not for myself, not for Vegeta... not for anyone. I feel like a burden, like I'm just weighing him down.

He deserves better. Someone stronger, more confident-

Without thinking he tore the paper out of the journal in frustration and wadded it up, before writing on the next page.

Weak piece of crap.

The words were stark against the white page, and he winced as he reread them. Was that really what he thought of himself?

He continued writing, letting the words flow out of him.

Useless. I can't protect myself, let alone him. I can't do anything right.

He tore that one up too.

Another.

This time, he wrote about his insecurities, about feeling like he wasn't good enough. He wrote about his failures, his inadequacies, and his vulnerabilities.

He wrote about how he hated feeling weak, and how much it frustrated him that he couldn't be stronger for Vegeta.

After ripping that page out as well, he tried again. He wrote about the day's events, the looks from the man at the mall, the shame he had felt.

He wrote about Vegeta, the way he protected him from Atticus, the way he always took care of him.

He wrote about his feelings of worthlessness, and how much he wanted to be better, to be stronger, better for Vegeta.

But in the end, he wadded that one up as well.

And another.

And another.

Every single time, he tore the pages out, wadding them up and tossing them to the side until he finally gave up with a frustrated, tired sigh.

He closed his journal, shoving it away in frustration. Writing things down hadn't helped at all. If anything, it had just made him feel even worse, as he saw his doubts and insecurities written out in black and white.

He closed his eyes and buried his face in his arms, letting out several choked sobs.

He felt pathetic. He was a grown man. He shouldn't be breaking down like this. But he couldn't stop himself.

His shoulders shook as he continued to cry, his tears falling onto the desk in front of him. It was all just too much.

The aching in his tail scar persisted. He clutched at the area, trying to calm his nerves.

He knew he had to do something, to stop the thoughts that were so violently running through his head.

Standing up, he stumbled out of the bedroom down to the kitchen, his vision blurry from the tears. His breathing was short and ragged, and his chest ached with every breath.

He knew what he wanted to do, knew that he was looking for something to relieve the pain, to silence the thoughts in his head. But he also knew that Vegeta had taken all the knives and blades away, locked them in the drawers. If he broke the locks, Vegeta would know.

He stumbled over to the drawers, the tears still falling down his face, soaking the front of his shirt. He clutched at the fabric of his jacket, which he still hadn't bothered to take off.

He looked at the locks, his hands shaking. He knew he shouldn't do it. It was wrong, it was weak. He knew that.

But he was desperate. He needed to feel something, anything, to make the anxiety go away.

He reached his hand out towards the drawer, his fingers trembling. He could feel the cold metal of the lock under his fingers.

He yanked at it, tentatively, as if still questioning his actions.

The lock was sturdy. It wouldn't budge at all, and Goku felt a wave of frustration wash over him.

He tugged again and again, his devastation growing with each failed attempt.

He let out a frustrated snarl, his temper rising as the drawers still refused to open.

"Dammit…" he cursed, his voice hoarse from crying.

His heart sank into his stomach, but he refused to give up. He pulled again, harder this time, harder than anyone should be able to, and finally it snapped, the drawer busting along with it.

He let out a gasp as he stumbled backwards, the sound of the drawer breaking ringing in his ears.

He let out a gasp as he stumbled backwards onto the floor, the sound of the drawer breaking ringing in his ears.

Knives spilled out around him, surrounding his feet.

Goku sat there on the floor, his heart racing, the broken drawer, lock and knives in front of him.

The weight of what he had just done hit him all at once. He was angry, frustrated, but also ashamed of himself. He knew he shouldn't have broken the drawer, that he should have talked to Vegeta.

He knew it was wrong, and he had done it anyway.

He closed his eyes, feeling a fresh wave of tears well up in his eyes. He wanted to punch something, to scream, to let out all the self-hatred that was burning inside of him.

But all that came out was a soft sob, and he brought his hands up to his face, burying his head against his knees. He felt weak, weaker than he had ever felt before.

His chest was still aching, his breathing still short and ragged, and his tears were still falling. But now he was crying for a different reason. He was crying because he had broken Vegeta's trust, because he was a weak, pathetic coward, because he wasn't strong enough to handle his own goddamn feelings.

He was such an idiot. He had finally found somebody who loved him, somebody who wanted to protect and take care of him, and he was ruining everything because he was too damn selfish to just get over his own issues.

God, he was such a screw-up. He was going to drive Vegeta away, he was sure of it. Who would want to be with someone who was always so damn needy and emotional?

He was surprised Vegeta had put up with it for so long. He was surprised that he still loved him, after all the times he had messed up, all the times he had let him down.

Maybe Vegeta just pitied him. Maybe he just stayed because he felt like he had to, like it was his responsibility to look after him.

Maybe Vegeta would be better off without him. Maybe he was just holding him back, just weighing him down, just like he had always had.

He couldn't even keep it together for a few hours on his own. He needed Vegeta. He couldn't function without him. He was completely dependent on him, and he hated himself so much for it.

How the hell had he even gotten this way? How had he let himself become so weak and vulnerable, so damn useless? Why couldn't he just be strong, like Vegeta?

Wiping away some of the tears, he reached out, picking up one of the knives.

The blade was cold in his hand, and he swallowed slightly as he clutched the handle tightly. He looked at the metal, gazing at his reflection on the surface, distorted and warped.

He could see the fresh tear stains on his cheeks, the redness in his eyes. He looked like a mess, a complete wreck.

And for a second, he thought about what he was doing. He thought about how stupid it was, how wrong it was, and all the reasons why he shouldn't do it.

But then the thoughts came flooding back, the doubts and insecurities, the self-hatred.

And he didn't care anymore.

He lifted the blade up to his wrist, pressing it against the old scars that had littered the skin, just hard enough to draw blood.

He became entranced by the sight of it, creating another slash without hesitation.

But on the third one, he found himself coming to a pause again, tears dripping down and mixing in with the blood.

A small voice nagged at him in the back of his head.

This is wrong…

He squeezed his eyes shut, his heart aching as he took in a shaky breath.

I shouldn't be doing this…

He took a deep breath, swallowing hard as he let out a trembling exhale.

He *wanted* to do it. He wanted to feel something, anything, other than the pain he was feeling inside.

But how could he do this to Vegeta? How could he break his trust like this?

It would destroy him if he found out. It would destroy both of them. He couldn't do that, not to him, not to the person who cared the most for him.

With another shaky breath, he lifted the blade away from his skin, and dropped it to the floor, its metallic clatter loud in the otherwise silent kitchen.

After a moment, he rose to his feet, blood still dripping from his wrist as he walked over to the freezer, grabbing a piece of ice.

He pressed it against his wrist, wincing at the coldness against his hot skin. He could feel his heartbeat start to slow down, and his breathing became more steady, more even.

He leaned back against the counter, letting out a long, shaky breath. His head felt too heavy, and his eyes felt red and itchy.

His mind was too jumbled to try to think anything coherent. He knew he should go talk to Vegeta about what he had just done, but the thought of facing him right now made his stomach churn with guilt and shame.

And yet… Upon recalling the pile of knives that had fallen on the floor and the drawer that he had just broken, the destroyed lock, his gut twisted.

He knew there was no way he could hide that from Vegeta. Vegeta would notice the damaged drawer the very moment he stepped into the kitchen, and then it would lead to more arguing, more fighting, and Goku didn't have the energy to deal with any of that right now.

He bit his lip, the stinging pain on his wrist reminding him of what he had just done.

He looked down at the ice in his hand, turning slowly red as it mixed in with the blood that continued to escape from his wrist.

He closed his eyes, feeling his heart ache and his stomach clench tighter. He didn't want to be like this. He just wanted to go back to how things used to be, to when he was stronger.

He looked at the mess in front of him; the busted drawer and knives on the floor, the blood, the ice in his hand, and he took another deep breath, trying to steady himself. Maybe it was best if he cleaned the area up first.

The least work for Vegeta to deal with, the better. That of course included dressing his own wounds as well.

Once the ice was melted, he stood up, picking up the knives. His wrist was still bleeding, but it had died down some, so he didn't need to get a paper towel.

He started cleaning up the knives, picking them up one by one and placing them on the counter top. He was careful, making sure to only hold them by the handles to avoid cutting himself with the blades, and placed the bloodied one in the sink.

The task made him feel a little bit better. It kept his mind focused and his hands busy. Though he was still sick with anxiety at the thought of talking to Vegeta once he was done, he also felt a small sense of accomplishment as he placed the last knife on the counter top.

The drawer was a complete lost cause at this point. It was badly splintered at the bottom, and was just barely hanging to the cabinets by hinges. Trying to fix it would be pointless.

And the lock too. It was busted.

He sighed and placed the broken lock and drawer on top of the counter, his mind starting to race with all the different possibilities of what Vegeta's response to all of this could be. Would he get mad? Disappointed? Sad? Worried?

Or all of the above?

He rubbed a hand through his hair in frustration, before his eye caught sight of the blood on his wrist again, the wounds were red and jagged.

He sighed again.

I suppose I should clean those up as well, before they get infected or something.

He approached the cabinet, grabbing a handful of paper towels before making his way back to the sink. He turned the faucet on, letting the water run for a moment before he began to clean the wounds on his wrist, the water turning pink from the blood.

He winced as the water touched the open wounds, stinging slightly. He could see the skin around them was swelling and turning red.

He cleaned them out as best as he could, before grabbing some more paper towels to apply pressure to them.

He took a deep breath, watching the blood start to soak through the paper towels. He knew he should probably find some bandages or something, but he couldn't bring himself to do it.

He just sat there, leaning against the counter, and closing his eyes, trying to calm himself down.

His mind was still buzzing with thoughts, and he could feel his heart beating hard against his chest, especially when he noticed a drop of blood on his jacket sleeve.

He took it off, not wanting to risk staining it any further.

This is a total mess. I can't believe I screwed up again. Why am I like this…?

The thoughts continued to circle in his head, like a buzzard circling its prey. The anxiety he had been trying so hard to push down was bubbling back up, and he suddenly felt like he couldn't breathe.

Nothing was helping anymore, and to make matters worse the pain in his tail scar refused to go away. Even now he could still feel Atticus fondling him, and Allan-

Letting out another sigh, Goku threw away the paper towels and headed back upstairs to the bathroom to grab some bandages for his arm.

He opened the medicine cabinet, thankful to see that Vegeta had stocked it with multiple first-aid supplies. He picked up a roll of bandages and a bottle of antiseptic, before closing the cabinet door to look at himself in the mirror.

He looked like hell. His face was red and puffy from crying, his hair was a mess, and his eyes were bloodshot. And worst of all, he could see the fresh cut marks on his wrist, still bleeding ever so slightly.

He grabbed the bottle of antiseptic and a cotton pad, before pouring some of the antiseptic onto the cotton pad and gently began dabbing it on his arm. It stung like hell, but he did his best to ignore it.

After he was done cleaning his wounds, he grabbed a large bandage and wrapped it around his wrist.

Once he was finished, let out another deep breath, trying to steady his racing heart. He still felt like he was going to be sick.

He could hear a voice in the back of his head, scolding him for what he had done. Telling him he was reckless, careless, stupid.

What had he been thinking? Why couldn't he just deal with his emotions like a normal person?

How many times had Vegeta told him to come talk to him if he was feeling bad? But he never listened, stubbornly keeping everything inside until it built up and he couldn't take it anymore. And now here he was, dealing with the consequences of his own stupidity.

He took another deep breath and left the bathroom, the guilt and shame still burning in his chest as he made his way further upstairs, back to their bedroom, where Vegeta was still asleep.

The alcohol had really knocked him out, or he probably would have woken up at the sound of the drawer being torn apart, since he was usually a light sleeper.

He walked over and sat down on the edge of the bed. He looked down at his boyfriend, his heart aching in his chest.

The light coming through the window made Vegeta's skin glow, his dark hair contrasting against the white sheets. He looked so peaceful, so perfect. Even asleep, Vegeta still looked beautiful.

His perfect cheekbones, his furrowed eyebrows, his lips…

God, Goku loved him so much. He was the only thing that made him feel normal, like he was actually worth something.

But now he had messed up. He had broken his trust, destroyed their things, and hurt himself *again* ... how was he supposed to make up for that?

He wanted to reach out and run his fingers through Vegeta's hair, wanted to wake him up and talk to him, apologize, ask for forgiveness. But he was scared. And even though he loved Vegeta, even though he knew how much he loved him back, he couldn't help feeling like he didn't deserve him.

"Stupid... so stupid…" he muttered to himself. He wanted to cry again, but he didn't. He was scared to even move, scared to wake Vegeta up and face him, wanting more time to figure out what to say to him.

Until he wasn't anymore.

Out of nowhere, Vegeta started to gasp lightly in his sleep, his eyebrows furrowing with fear.

Goku froze, watching as Vegeta started to squirm in his sleep, his face twisted with anxiety and terror. His breathing quickened, and he let out another small gasp, his hands clenching the bed sheets.

Goku had seen this before, it wasn't like it was the first time Vegeta had had a nightmare. Of course, Vegeta never talked about them, and Goku knew better than to ask, but he also knew how much they affected his boyfriend.

Vegeta was starting to get more agitated, his breathing labored and fast, and he was starting to mumble something in his sleep. Goku couldn't fully make out what he was saying, but it sounded like he was begging someone, pleading for something to stop.

Goku hesitantly shook him by his shoulder. “Vegeta…?”

At first, Vegeta didn't react. But then, after a few long, tense seconds, his eyes shot open, his body jerking awake in alarm.

He sat up, breathing hard, his chest heaving up and down as he struggled to catch his breath. He looked panicked, disoriented, and for a brief moment, he didn't recognize Goku sitting next to him.

Vegeta was no stranger to nightmares. And although it wasn't every night like it had been with Goku, they were just as bad.

Filled with the blood of his victims throughout the years, of women, men, and children alike.

So many innocent lives that had been taken by him. So many civilizations that had been destroyed, especially by his great ape form.

His nightmares would bring him back to those days, the little bit of time he had spent in hell forever ingrained in his memory as it refused to let his crimes go.

The voices of his victims telling him it was all his fault. Rotting bodies crying out of sheer agony and torment. Many had no eyes, they were dismembered, torn apart, yet still clung to him, blaming him, unable to rest in peace.

And Vegeta could do nothing, because he knew they were right. It was all his fault.

People touching him. Atticus. The others.

“You were a ‘child’ who committed ***genocide*** *. You're just as bad as the rest of us.”*

“If anything, you deserve this.”

Vegeta ran a hand through his hair, tears welling up in his eyes.

Atticus's words had affected him more than he wanted to let on.

Because, despite what he had done, he wasn't wrong.

Vegeta had killed people. There was nothing he could do to change that.

Sniffling, he wiped the tears from his eyes, sighing.

"Vegeta...? Hey, are you... okay? Did you have a nightmare…?" Goku reached back out, hesitantly touching his arm.

Vegeta flinched, surprised by the suddenness of Goku's touch. He looked up at his lover, his eyes still slightly glazed over from the nightmare he had just had.

"It's nothing." He muttered, his voice shaky. It was a lie, of course and Goku could tell.

Vegeta ran a hand through his hair again, his body tense and coiled tight. The nightmare was still fresh in his mind, the voices of the people he had killed still ringing in his ears.

Taking a shaky breath, he closed his eyes, trying to push the memories away. He hated this, he hated feeling vulnerable, hated the fact that Atticus still had some sort of grasp on him, even in death.

And he wanted to push Goku away and tell him to leave him alone. He didn't want him to see him like this, to see how weak he was.

At the same time, he needed something.

Some way to prove to himself that Atticus hadn't broken him. And Goku's touch, his presence... It was the only thing that was keeping him from completely unraveling.

Goku watched him with concern, wanting more than anything to offer him comfort.

“Do you mind if I hold you…?” Goku offered, sheepishly, holding his arms out towards him.

Vegeta turned towards Goku, leaning into his arms. He wanted to feel his warmth, his love, his strength. He needed to be able to cling to him, use him as an anchor to pull himself back to reality.

He buried his face into Goku's chest, his body shaking as he desperately clung to him. The tears were welling up in his eyes again, and he squeezed them shut, trying to keep them from falling.

“...Was it him again?” Goku held him tighter, one hand rubbing up and down his back. He wasn't sure if he had a right to ask, he never had before, but did so anyways.

“...It’s more than that… It’s the time I spent in hell. The people I've murdered… My victims… I keep seeing them… Over and over again… He tells me I deserved it… and maybe he was right, after all… Maybe I did *deserve* what happened… I'm a *monster* , Kakarot… I shouldn't even *be* here right now…”

"What? No, no, no, don't say that. Nothing you did justifies what he did to you. Nothing could *ever* justify what he did.” He shook his head, his eyes locked onto Vegeta's. He had no idea that he had been feeling that way. “So don't think that…”

"But I-"

Vegeta's protest was cut off by Goku's lips on his. The kiss was firm, but gentle, and it was filled with all the love and reassurance that Goku could possibly give.

He pulled back after a moment, resting his forehead against Vegeta's. "Listen to me, what happened with Atticus wasn’t your fault. You were a victim, okay? You didn't deserve to be hurt or taken advantage of. Nobody deserves that…”

At hearing that, tears welled up in Vegeta's eyes. He clutched at Goku's shirt, breaking down in his arms.

Maybe it was the alcohol still clearly in his system that was making him this way, Goku didn't know, but it was tearing him to pieces.

He wanted to do something to comfort him.

But what?

All of a sudden, he had an idea.

Without any warning, he started to hum.

It was the Saiyan song that Vegeta sang. He didn't know the words, so he could only imitate the melody.

Almost immediately, Vegeta began to relax in his arms as he listened to it.

Goku's voice was soft, but shaky. He clearly wasn't used to singing in front of others because he had been shaky earlier as well.

Still, just the thought behind it was enough.

Vegeta's tears finally stopped, causing a wave of relief to wash over Goku.

Once Goku finished, Vegeta reached out and touched Goku's wrist, easily taking notice of the bandage. “You're hurt… What happened…?”

Goku’s heart stopped when Vegeta brushed his thumb across his arm, tugging at his wrist cuff where the bandage was poking out of. He took a deep breath, steeling himself for the conversation. He knew it was going to be difficult for both of them. “...I did something stupid earlier…”

Vegeta's heart was racing, fear and uncertainty coursing through his veins. "What did you do? Talk to me…"

Goku swallowed hard and took a deep breath, bracing himself for what he was about to say.

"I… I messed up again…" He confessed, his eyes dropping down to look at the floor. "I broke the kitchen drawer, and..."

Vegeta's eyes widened, easily figuring out what had happened from there. His heart ached as he looked at the bandage wrapped around his arm, a mixture of sadness, anger, and guilt swirling in his chest. He took Goku's hand into his. “You took the knives, didn't you…”

"I’m sorry…” Goku's eyes still cast downward. The shame and guilt were almost palpable, and he couldn't bring himself to look at his boyfriend.

He could feel the heat from Vegeta's fingers on his skin, and he clenched his jaw, bracing himself for the inevitable barrage of questions and reprimands.

But Vegeta didn't say anything, not at first. He just sat there, looking down at Goku's arm, his hand gently running over the bandage wrapped around it.

After a few moments of tense silence, he spoke up, his voice soft.

"Can I... Can I see it?”

Goku tensed at the question, his whole body going rigid. He knew this was coming, knew that Vegeta would want to see the damage he had inflicted upon himself. He turned his arm over in Vegeta's hand, his eyes still fixed on the floor. He didn’t trust himself to speak.

The silence between them was deafening as Vegeta pulled back the bandage on Goku's wrist, his fingers moving with careful precision. He held his breath as he did so, his heart pounding in his chest.

Once the bandage was pulled back, Vegeta could see them, the angry red lines that marred his skin. They were a harsh reminder of the pain that Goku was going through, the battle he was fighting against himself.

And it took everything in him to stay calm.

“I… stopped… by the way…” Goku suddenly spoke up. “I started to hurt myself… But then I decided to hold the ice instead… Like Whis told me to…”

A look of relief and sadness flashed across Vegeta's face at Goku's words. Despite everything, he felt a small amount of pride at the fact that his boyfriend had used the technique they had suggested to stop himself from harming himself.

He gently traced his fingers over one of the cuts on Goku's wrist, his touch feather-like. “Good, I'm glad.”

He was relieved that Goku hadn't gone any further, but he was also heartbroken that he had felt the need to hurt himself in the first place. And he couldn't help but feel helplessness at the sight of the cuts.

He paused for a moment, his mind racing with conflicting emotions.

"Aren't you mad at me...?" Goku looked down, letting his bangs shadow his eyes. "I broke the drawer…”

Vegeta was quiet for a moment, mulling over the question.

"I am… a little…” Vegeta admitted, but his eyes softened. “But it's just a piece of furniture, it can be replaced… Easily… Besides, I'm proud of you… You said you chose to use the ice instead… That’s all I care about…”

Goku looked up at him then, a flicker of hope in his eyes. He could see the mix of emotions playing out on Vegeta's face - anger, sadness, but also love and worry.

He hadn't expected Vegeta to be so forgiving over damaging his property. A part of him was grateful, but he couldn't help but feel guilty for worrying him so much.

Vegeta saw the guilt and self-deprecation in Goku's expression, and he couldn't help but feel a pang of sadness at the sight of it.

"No, stop that." he said firmly, his tone brooking no argument. "You're thinking you don't deserve my kindness, aren't you? That's bullshit and you know it."

He grabbed Goku's chin, forcing him to look at him. "You do deserve it. You deserve all of it and more. And I'm not about to let you think otherwise, are we clear?"

Goku's eyes widened slightly with a blush, offering a small nod.

Vegeta held his gaze for a moment longer, making sure that Goku understood the seriousness of his words.

"Good." He pecked his cheek. "Now, I want you to show me the damage you did to the drawer."

Getting up, Vegeta followed him into the kitchen.

"So this is the one, huh?" He noted leaning down to inspect the damage. It was heavily splintered, and the lock was broken. "Well, it definitely looks like it'll have to be replaced. For now, all I can really do is trim the area down and make sure there aren't any sharp edges. And the knives… Is this all of them? You didn't take any, did you?"

"...No…" Goku shook his head.

Vegeta studied him for a moment, before placing a hand on his shoulder. "I see. If you want to go back into the room now, you can."

"You sure you don't need any help?" Goku asked, nervously.

"I'll be fine, I've got this." Vegeta said simply.

"I think I might go train in the gravity chamber for a while…" Goku started to leave the kitchen.

“Wait…” Vegeta paused, after picking up the knives.

“What is it?” Goku looked back at him.

“You just started training again. Your body might not be capable of handling that much strain right now…” Vegeta picked up the knives “I think it would be best if you let *me* oversee your training for a while.”

“What? I'm not a child. I can handle it just fine!” Goku choked out.

“I said no.” Vegeta said sternly. “Go back to the room for now. We'll talk later.”

Fighting back the urge to defy him, Goku trotted back upstairs, leaving Vegeta to his own devices.

Unfortunately, All Vegeta could really do in the end was secure the knives into another location and clean up all the pieces of the broken drawer he found. No doubt he'd have to get Bulma to replace it.

Which of course was frustrating but it was what it was.

He used a file to trim down the bamboo and split edges left behind by the drawer, making sure there was no more jagged wood left behind. It was bamboo, so he had to be careful.

As he worked at it, he soon found himself greeted by one of the worst hangovers he had had in years and decided in the end the drawer area was as fixed as it could get, before clutching his head in agony, barely managing to keep walking.

Struggling to focus on his surroundings, he returned to the bedroom and noticed Goku was sitting at the desk, balls of wadded up paper surrounding him.

Part of him wanted to scold him for making such a mess of the place, but when he approached him, the words got stuck in his throat as he saw the redness around Goku's eyes.

He's been crying.

He felt a tinge of guilt rising up inside of him, knowing it must have been his fault for telling him not to train in the time chamber.

But he wanted to make sure that Goku took care of himself. He was still recovering from an eating disorder, that wasn't something that could simply be ignored. His body was still facing the effects of that. If he tried training in the gravity chamber as he was *now* , there was no telling what could happen.

Kneeling down, he picked up one of the wads of paper that was on the floor.

He assumed they were just drawings that Goku didn't like, so he didn't think much before starting to unfold it, but he was shocked by the content.

| *I feel like I should be doing more for him. I should have… He suffered so long yet I couldn't do anything to protect him. I should have been stronger.*

What?

Vegeta paused, before looking at another.

| *Useless. I can't protect myself, let alone him. I can't do anything right.*

| *I feel so weak right now. I'm not strong enough... not for myself, not for Vegeta... not for anyone. I feel like a burden, like I'm just weighing him down. He deserves better. Someone stronger, more confident-*

| *He deserves better. Someone stronger, more confident-*

| *Weak piece of crap.*

| *I can't believe I didn't realize anything sooner. What's wrong with me? I'm such an idiot.*

| *I'm a terrible person.*

| *I need to get stronger. I have to-*

| *I have to protect him.*

| *Weak. Weak. Weak. WeakweakweakweakweakweakWEAK*

| *I wonder if maybe I deserve to suffer. He got hurt because of me. Protecting me from Atticus… I-*

The page was cut off, the sentence unfinished. But it was easy to figure out what he had wanted to say.

| *Some guy was staring at us earlier. Probably because we're both men. Why does it bother him so much that two guys like each other? Why can't he just mind his own business?*

| *I hate myself. Why can't I just be happy and get over it?*

| *Why can't I be normal?*

| *I want to be normal.*

| *I want to be normal.*

| *I want to be normal.*

Vegeta wasn't even sure what to think at first, until noticed Goku's journal was right in front of him.

Did he accidentally knock it over?

Truth be told, he hadn't read any of Goku's journal entries before now, and nor had he asked to. He believed in respecting people's privacy.

But when he saw what was written on the paper, in bold, scratchy lettering, his heart sank.

—-----

| *Journal Entry 12, (May 17th, 780)*

*GET OFF GET O **F** F OFF **GET OFF GET OFF***

I WANT TO DIE

—----

“What in the world…?” Vegeta’s eyebrows furrowed when he read it.

Judging by the date, it was over about two months old, but that didn't lessen the concern he was feeling.

On instinct, he looked over to the right and there was another entry that caught his eye.

—-------

| *Journal Entry 11, (May 16th, 780)*

I want to cut myself so badly right now, but Vegeta locked away all the razors and sharp objects.

I hate this

I could go somewhere, but it seems too much hassle just to grab a knife or razor. Plus, I don't really feel comfortable leaving Vegeta alone with Atticus right now.

—-------

Vegeta's eyes narrowed.

He really talks about this stuff in here…

I had no clue he was feeling this way…

—--------

| *Journal Entry 13, (May 19th, 780)*

I wish Vegeta would stop drinking. I'm starting to wonder if Atticus is rubbing off on him. He was acting strange again earlier. It's kinda scaring me.

—--------

| *Journal Entry 2 (April 14th, 780)*

Vegeta got drunk earlier. I'm not really sure why, but he was crying.

I noticed some more bruises on his neck. He looked like he had been strangled.

Actually, I've been seeing marks like that on him a lot lately. They're always in the same places. He says he's been training with Atticus, but I feel like he's hiding something.

The other day, I think Atticus groped him.

I can't say for certain about it, but Vegeta looked really uncomfortable when it happened. I tried to ask him about it, but he told me it was nothing, and said to stay out of it.

I've never seen him like this before.

…

It was at this point that Vegeta had to pull away from it.

He had no idea that Goku was that bothered by his drinking.

It reminded him of Bulma. How she was always worrying about him so much when they were together.

He gripped his stomach, closing the journal and placing it back on the desk where it belonged.

In that moment, guilt hit him like bricks.

He knew that he had broken his trust by snooping into his private business, but more than that or anything else, he couldn't deny the overwhelming worry he felt quickly rising back to the surface, as he looked back up and once again saw the tears on Goku's face, reminded of his unexplained incident from earlier that day and quickly putting the pieces together, able to guess now why he may have hurt himself.

He's been blaming himself for what Atticus did to me… For not being stronger…

Is that why he got so upset earlier when I told him I wanted to monitor his training?

That must have been why he hurt himself as well.

He had tried so hard to keep him safe. But, no matter what he did, it seemed like in some ways even his own presence had been hurting Goku as well.

What more was he supposed to do?

He placed the journal down on the desk and let out a shaky breath, picking up more of the wads of paper to toss them into the trash can.

Kneeling down next to him, he took a moment to brush the moisture out of the corner of Goku's eye. “Kakarot, wake up.”

“Vegeta…?” Goku's eyes fluttered open when he felt Vegeta brush away a tear, and he was greeted with his concerned gaze.

"Hey…" Vegeta uttered softly.

“Hey…” Goku replied groggily.

“...Get around… You wanted to train, right?” Vegeta knew he needed to talk to him, about what had happened, but he couldn't. Not right now.

Yes, despite his agonizing headache, he wanted more than anything to do something special for him.

“Training…?” Goku took a moment to process it. “ Oh…! Uh, yeah, sure…”

“Great, I'll be back in a minute…” Vegeta stood up with one final squeeze to Goku's hand. “I need to get some pain killer from the bathroom.

Hearing an okay, he walked off towards the bathroom, sighing and grabbing some Tylenol in hopes it would make his hangover go away.

He let out a shaky breath, and for the longest time didn't say much of anything, until finally he headed back to the bedroom.

“Kay, I'm ready.” Goku smiled upon seeing him.

Vegeta nodded, a faint smile on his face as well as he hugged an arm against him. “Come on, let’s go.”

…

“Now… When I say we stop, we stop, are we clear?” Vegeta had his arms folded, as they stood at another field than before, one which hadn't yet been destroyed. “I’m not about to have you passing out on me.”

“Okay, Vegeta…” Goku pouted slightly at being lectured, before preparing his stance. Down deep, however, he knew it was only his second day starting to train again so it was no wonder Vegeta wanted to limit him.

At the same time, that feeling of weakness spurred him on.

“I’m ready whenever you are, Kakarot. Come at me.” Vegeta prepared his stance.

Goku advanced towards Vegeta without hesitation and began to exchange blows with him.

They were just playful at first, to test his limitations.

But as the battle became more intense, Goku's thoughts became overrun by doubts, hindering his abilities.

He jumped back, trying to catch his breath.

Damn it.

I should have never let myself get this out of shape. I can barely keep up with him.

If only I hadn't stopped training, then…

Maybe I could have protected him.

“You’re distracted! Keep your focus on me!” Vegeta scolded him, appearing behind him with a devastating blow to his back, sending him flying.

Upon crashing into a large boulder, Goku choked up blood, forcing himself to get back up.

Unfortunately, Vegeta wasn't letting him up any time soon. He was already in front of him by the time the other man could stand on his feet again.

Another kick, this one to the gut.

Goku stumbled back, catching his footing.

Vegeta's smirk widened as he rushed towards him again, ready to make another attack.

This time, he landed on top of him, pinning Goku’s arms to the ground.

Goku kicked him in the face, sending him flying back into the air.

Vegeta’s eyes narrowed, as he recovered from the attack and landed back on the ground.

“You got lucky,” he hissed.

He wiped a bit of blood from his lip, before charging straight at him. He was ready for a counterattack, in case Goku tried to pull that same trick on him again.

This time, when he pounced, he wrapped his arms around Goku's waist slamming him back in the ground, pinning him down with his full bodyweight.

As he lay pinned beneath Vegeta, Goku couldn't help but feel frustrated with himself. He knew he was better than this. He had been so powerful at one point, and now he was struggling to keep up with his partner. *Damn it.*

"Your mind is wandering again.” The prince's breath ghosted across Goku's earlobe, sending chills down his spine. A sly grin was playing at the corners of his mouth. He could feel Goku's heart racing in the palm of his hand, egging him on. “You need to clear your mind and focus on the present. On *me* .”

Goku's eyes widened in response, his face heating up as the weight of Vegeta's body pressed against his, each shift in position making it harder to concentrate.

Without any warning, he powered up to Super Saiyan Blue, managing to push back, punching him in the face. He jumped back to regain his footing, rubbing his ear and neck to fight off the sensation of Vegeta's breath on his skin.

Vegeta stumbled back, slightly taken aback by the unexpected attack. But he quickly regained his composure, and wiped away the blood trickling down from his nose.

His eyes narrowed as he glared at Goku, his own sense of pride flaring up. He let out a low growl, and began powering up.

" *That's* more like it, I knew you had it in you." he taunted, his voice low and dangerous, as his own hair turned blue.

He unleashed a flurry of powerful attacks, each one designed to throw Goku off his guard. He wanted him to stay focused, and he knew the best way to do that was to keep him on his toes.

Vegeta's attacks were fast and precise, making it difficult for Goku to keep up. But he wasn't backing down, he was a Saiyan, after all.

With a determined glare, he gritted his teeth as he countered Vegeta's attacks. Despite being out of practice, the familiar adrenaline rush came rushing back to him.

He threw a punch of his own, the force of it sending Vegeta back a few steps. He could feel his heart thrumming in his ears, the rush of power making him want more.

His eyes darkened, meeting Vegeta's gaze, as they continued their back and forth. The battlefield was filled with the sounds of grunts, fists connecting, and the occasional swear word being muttered under their breaths. It was a dance they knew all too well, and the rhythm was intense.

As the fight continued, Vegeta's competitive instincts were starting to take over. He would never admit it out loud, but the thrill of sparring with Goku was electrifying.

He pushed himself harder, aiming more powerful attacks at his partner. Each time they connected, a rush of satisfaction flooded him, knowing that he was at the very least, keeping Goku on his toes.

Finally, Vegeta caught Goku off guard, landing a powerful kick that sent him reeling backwards.

He smirked, feeling a sense of victory, as he watched Goku struggle to regain his footing. "Getting tired already, Kakarot?" he taunted.

“No way, I'm just getting started.” Goku's own lips tugged upwards as he struggled to stand back up.

"Oh, is that so? Good, I wouldn't want this to be too easy. I'm just getting warmed up myself." Vegeta took a step forward, his eyes narrowing into slits. "Give me your best shot.”

He prepared himself for the next attack, knowing that Goku would be coming at him full force. He could sense the fire burning within him, and he knew that his partner wouldn't hold back now.

Goku let out a roar, advancing towards him and bombarding him with a series of punches.

It was exactly what Vegeta expected. He blocked each punch with ease, weaving and dodging with the grace of a well-versed warrior.

With a quick sidestep, he managed to sweep Goku's legs from under him, causing him to lose his balance, and tumble to the ground once again.

Goku caught himself with his hand last minute, landing a kick to Vegeta's jaw and flipping backwards.

The kick came out of nowhere, knocking him back. Vegeta let out a low growl, as he spit out a bit of blood.

"Impressive," he grumbled, rubbing his jaw. "You're not as rusty as I thought."

He quickly recovered from the blow, readying himself for the next attack. This was getting interesting. He had underestimated Goku's determination, and the mistake only fueled his competitive spirit even further.

Goku allowed a cocky grin to spread across his face. "What, you thought I'd be going down that easy? I might be a bit rusty, but I'm not out of the game just yet."

Vegeta let out a scoff, his pride wounded slightly, but then he smirked. He had to admit, seeing Goku's confidence return felt good. It meant that his training was helping.

"Don't get cocky, Kakarot. I'll have you flat on your back in no time."

He got back into his fighting stance, his eyes locked on Goku.

"Ready for round two?" Vegeta asked, unable to hide the excitement in his voice. This is what he loved. The battle, the competition, the thrill of it all. And having Goku as his opponent made it even more satisfying.

"Bring it on," Goku replied, the same fire in his eyes. He knew that Vegeta was far from being done. And for some reason, he found himself enjoying this. It was liberating being able to let loose and spar with someone who understood him completely.

Vegeta let out a ferocious battle cry and charged towards Goku, his fists flying. Each blow was met with an opposite reaction, the sound of heavy impact echoing through the empty landscape.

The two Saiyans continued their dance of violence, each trying to one-up the other with their speed and power. Neither were holding back, and it showed in the way they were both breathing heavily, their clothes tattered and dirty.

Despite their exhaustion, neither one was ready to call it quits. They were both too stubborn and competitive for that. With a final rush, Vegeta attempted to land another powerful hit, aiming for Goku's chest.

However, Goku managed to sidestep the attack just in time and countered with a brutal uppercut to Vegeta's chin. The impact sent him flying backwards, but he quickly righted himself and landed on his feet.

He wiped away the trickle of blood from his lip and let out a low chuckle. "Not bad, you're starting to look like your old self again."

"Told you I wasn't out of the game yet," Goku replied with a smirk. "You're the one getting slow."

Vegeta's eyes narrowed at the comment, a low growl escaping his lips. "Oh, really? I think I've got a few tricks up my sleeve that'll prove you wrong."

He took a step forward, his stance low, he was ready for their battle to continue.

"We'll see about that," Goku replied, mirroring his stance. The competitive fire in his eyes burned brightly.

His mind was clear, focused only on their fight. All the doubts and insecurities from before seemed to disappear and all that was left was the pure joy of fighting.

The two warriors exchanged blows in a blur, their movements rapid and precise. It was a dance of violence, each attack met with a block or parry. The only sounds that echoed through the battlefield was their heavy breathing and the occasional grunt of effort.

Goku's body was screaming at him, telling him to slow down and rest, but he ignored it.

Vegeta was just as exhausted, but he too, was unwilling to stop. The adrenaline coursing through his veins was addicting, and the thrill of the fight was invigorating.

"You look like you're about to collapse, Kakarot," he called out between breaths, a taunting grin on his face.

"Yeah? Well, speak for yourself..." Goku sent him a fierce glare. He was at his limit, but he refused to give up. Pushing past the pain, he threw a powerful punch, aiming for Vegeta's jaw.

Vegeta dodged the punch with a swift sidestep, retaliating with a kick aimed at Goku's chest. The kick connected, sending Goku stumbling back with a huff of pain.

"Oof..." Goku's vision swam for a moment, but he managed to stay up, although he was now struggling to catch his breath. "Damn it... You're really not gonna make this easy, are you?"

"Now what would be the fun in that?" Vegeta quipped, a sly grin on his face. He was in his element, loving every second of it. "Besides, you need the extra push, don't you?"

Goku gritted his teeth in frustration. He hated when Vegeta was right. But he also knew that he couldn't back down. Not now.

He braced himself and charged forward, throwing another punch at Vegeta.

Once again, Vegeta easily dodged the attack, using the momentum to land a powerful kick to Goku's stomach, sending him sprawling backwards in the dirt.

"You're too predictable, Kakarot," he taunted, walking forward. "It's almost too easy."

Goku grunted as he landed on the ground, the wind knocked out of him.

Damn it.

He struggled to get back up, the exhaustion now taking its toll. He was on the verge of collapsing.

Just... a little while longer...

Looking up at Vegeta, who was now looming over him, he managed a weak glare.

Goku's glare intensified as he slowly pushed himself back on his feet. Despite the overwhelming fatigue, he wasn't ready to concede defeat just yet.

He could feel the weight of his own body, his limbs sluggish and heavy, but he forced himself to keep moving. With a determined stride, he advanced towards Vegeta aiming a blow towards his chest.

Vegeta smirked slightly, dodging the blow with ease. He was beginning to enjoy this far too much.

"You're tenacious, I'll give you that," he said, circling around Goku. "But you're running on fumes, and we both know it."

"Shut... up..." Goku panted between gritted teeth. He knew Vegeta was right, but he wasn't about to admit it out loud. With a burst of adrenaline, he lunged forward, trying to land another hit.

Again, Vegeta dodged the attack effortlessly, this time grabbing Goku's arm and using his own momentum to throw him over his shoulder. Goku hit the ground with a heavy thud, his body protesting loudly.

"Just give up already," Vegeta taunted, standing over him now. "You're not getting anywhere like this. You're too tired to even stand."

Goku's chest heaved with each labored breath, his body crying out for rest. But the fire in his eyes was still burning, refusing to let him give up.

"I'm... not... done yet..." He forced out through gritted teeth, pushing himself back up onto his knees.

Goku lunged at him again and knocked him back. The two Saiyans fell to the ground, Goku on top of him, his hands on Vegeta's wrists.

Vegeta was taken by surprise when Goku tackled him to the ground. The sudden impact knocked the wind out of him for a brief moment.

But, despite the current predicament, a smirk tugged at the corners of Vegeta's lips. He had to admit, this felt good. Having Goku on top of him like this, exhausted and on the verge of collapse... he wouldn't mind this happening more often.

However, he couldn't let that thought linger for long.

"You're not looking so hot, Kakarot," he teased, struggling against the pinning hands holding him down.

"I said to shut up..." Goku panted, his eyes half lidded as he struggled against the exhaustion that was taking hold of him. He straddled him, his grip on Vegeta's wrists loosening up significantly.

"Oh, I'm sorry, did I hit a nerve?" Vegeta taunted, enjoying this far too much now. "You look like you could collapse at any second."

He flexed his wrists, testing the weakening grips, feeling a sense of satisfaction when Goku's fingers slipped slightly.

“I can still fight…” Goku gritted his teeth, trying to keep pushing on, but his body was screaming for rest, his legs bucking underneath him.

Dammit, I'm losing my strength.

Goku grunted in frustration as his grip slipped. The fight had taken its toll, and he was struggling to stay upright.

Vegeta's smirk widened as the hands pinning him down loosened even more. He could feel Goku's fatigue now, the way his body sagged, his breaths ragged. It was almost satisfying, in a twisted sort of way, to see him like this.

His smirk turned into a wicked grin as he saw Goku's struggling. He decided it was time to end this little game.

With a quick movement, he used his strength to flip their positions, effectively pinning Goku beneath him now. He straddled him, looking down at his exhausted partner, a smug expression on his face.

"Hey...!" Goku protested, but he was too exhausted to fight back. His eyes were half lidded as he looked up at him.

Goku's usually spiky hair was now damp with sweat and sticking to his forehead, his face flushed from exhaustion and his chest heaving with each ragged breath.

"Not so cocky now, are you?" Vegeta taunted, leaning down slightly to look at him more closely.

Goku's face scrunched up in a mixture of annoyance and exhaustion. He attempted to push Vegeta off of him, but his arms were too tired to offer any real resistance.

"Get off me," he muttered, his voice coming out hoarse and ragged. "Bastard…”

"I don't think so," Vegeta retorted, his hands pinning Goku's wrists down on either side of his head.

He leaned down closer, his face hovering just inches above Goku's now, their breathing mingling together. "Heh, you look adorable like this.”

Goku's face became flushed at the distance between them, his eyelids drooping.

"What's the matter? Cat got your tongue?" Vegeta taunted, his voice dropping to a low murmur.

He leaned down even farther, his breath ghosting over Goku's face, his lips barely a whisper's distance from his.

Damn it… Why does he have to be so close…

Goku's frustration was evident even in his exhausted state, but he had to admit, he didn't detest it.

He tried to make a snarky comment, but it came out more like a pouty huff, "You're enjoying this far too much, you ass."

Vegeta's lips curled into another smirk, his ego further inflated by Goku's response.

"Perhaps, but I'm not the only one," he teased, shifting his weight slightly, his body pressing even more firmly against him.

He leaned in even closer, their noses now practically touching, his voice dropping to an even lower murmur. "You like it when I'm on top of you like this, don't you, Kakarot?"

Goku's glare intensified despite his tiredness, his frustration and annoyance evident in the way he was breathing heavily. However, somewhere deep down, a part of him wasn't exactly hating the current situation.

"You're such a prick…" he muttered, refusing to admit aloud how much he was enjoying this. But his body was giving him away.

He couldn't deny the excitement he felt when Vegeta leaned in closer, nor the heat pooling in his gut.

Vegeta smirked, hearing the mix of annoyance and desire in Goku's voice. "You love it, don't lie," he shot back, his own breath coming fast now.

He shifted himself, one of his legs sliding between Goku's, pressing his body more solidly against his, as one of his hands traveled down to Goku's chest. "Admit it. You secretly love it when I dominate you like this."

But before Goku could retort, he closed the small distance and captured his lips in a hungry kiss, his tongue delving into his mouth.

Goku's breath hitched at the sudden kiss. Despite his resistance, his body betrayed him, the heat and familiarity of Vegeta’s touch sending a shiver down his spine.

He tried to put up a half-hearted resistance for a moment, pushing weakly against Vegeta's shoulders before his hand slid around his neck, holding him in place instead.

"I hate you…" he mumbled, but the way he was clinging to him spoke otherwise.

Vegeta's smirk widened into a satisfied smile against his lips. He knew that Goku was succumbing to him, despite his half-hearted protests.

He deepened the kiss, his tongue exploring every inch of his mouth, his body pressing down even more firmly against Goku's. He could feel the way Goku was holding him, keeping him close, all while trying to maintain some semblance of denial.

"No, you don’t," he murmured between kisses, his hands starting to wander over Goku's body, freeing Goku's other wrist.

Goku’s fingers instinctively dug into the back of his neck, a soft moan escaping his lips, his hips bucking slightly against Vegeta's.

“Shut up. I could still kick your ass…” he mumbled weakly, but the way his hands were now roaming over Vegeta's muscular back suggested otherwise.

Vegeta smirked against his lips, enjoying the effect he was having on him. "Oh, really? I'd like to see you try."

In that moment, Goku gathered just enough strength to reverse their positions once more, hands on Vegeta's chest, his breaths ragged.

Vegeta was caught off guard at first, but he quickly recovered. His smirk widened, enjoying this display of resilience.

"Heh, still got some fight left in you, after all, I see," he teased, his hands coming up to rest on Goku's waist, keeping him in place.

He looked up at Goku, admiring the sight of him straddling him, chest heaving with labored breaths, his eyes half-lidded with a mixture of exhaustion and desire. "You just can't stay down, can you?”

Goku leaned down, his face hovering mere inches away from Vegeta's. His eyes were narrowed in a half-hearted glare, but the heat in them betrayed his true feelings.

"I could go all night," he retorted, his fingers digging into Vegeta's broad chest.

"Is that so?" Vegeta replied, the smirk never leaving his lips. He tightened his grip on Goku's waist, his hands roaming over his backside. "Bold words, considering you're obviously about to collapse any second.”

Goku felt a bit of faux irritation at the retort, but couldn't deny the truth in it. He was still breathing hard, his body protesting with every move. His eyelids were becoming heavy and Goku blinked, trying to keep himself awake, his grip on Vegeta's chest tightening.

Vegeta could tell the strain on his body was clearly catching up with him. He reached up a hand to cup his cheek, a hint of concern in his voice. "You're exhausted, Kakarot, we should probably stop for now."

"No, I told you I can still fight." Goku's legs buckled slightly. His body was telling him it was time to rest, but he stubbornly continued to push himself. "Just let me… try…"

Vegeta's expression grew gentler as he noticed Goku struggling to stay upright. Seeing his usual stubbornness mixing with exhaustion was a rare sight, and it was clear that he was running on fumes.

He let out a small sigh, his hands gently stroking Goku's sides.

"No… You're pushing yourself too hard, Kakarot. You need to rest," He protested, knowing that Goku's body was past his limits.

"Don't worry, I can keep going, I have to..." he protested, his voice strained, his eyes half-lidded. Despite the signs of exhaustion, he attempted to maintain his defiant expression, refusing to admit defeat. "Just... a little... longer..."

I need to get stronger…

He just barely managed to push himself back upright, but his legs buckled beneath him, causing him to nearly collapse on top of Vegeta again.

"Idiot, you're going to pass out any second. You're in no condition to fight." Vegeta protested, catching him just before he could fall completely. He sat up, wrapping his arms around him, holding him close. "Why are you being so stubborn?"

"Cuz I *have* to... If I don't, then I won't be able to..." Goku's words were cut off by a wave of exhaustion washing over him, tears welling up in his eyes. His vision blurred slightly, and he found himself leaning heavily against Vegeta, his body protesting.

He stubbornly tried to continue his protest, but the words came out as a mumbled mess, his energy rapidly fading.

Vegeta's expression softened, knowing that he was pushing himself beyond his limits in his pursuit of strength.

He gently pulled Goku closer, his arms wrapping around him protectively. "Shhh, it's alright, you've done enough for today."

He knew Goku's determination to get stronger and his stubbornness would not allow him to give up easily, but he also knew that Goku's limits would win out now.

"Just... relax for now, alright?" he whispered, his hand gently stroking Goku's hair. "Let your body rest and heal. You can train more tomorrow."

He felt Goku's body sag against him, his head resting heavily against his chest. The fight seemed to have finally left him, his stubborn determination replaced by the desperate need for rest.

Vegeta's fingers continued to run through Goku's hair. He felt a mixture of affection and concern for the stubborn Saiyan in his arms, knowing that he would drive himself into exhaustion again and again in his relentless quest to become stronger.

Despite his attempts to fight it, Goku felt himself becoming limp, resting his face against the smaller man's chest. His hair returned to normal as he conceded.

Vegeta held him closer, rubbing soothing circles on his back. He felt the exact moment Goku gave in, the way his body relaxed and leaned against him completely.

"That's it," he whispered, pressing a gentle kiss against the top of his head. "Just let go and rest now."

He could feel the way Goku's breaths slowed down, his body finally succumbing to exhaustion. He continued to hold him, his own heart feeling a strange mix of tenderness and protectiveness as he

gazed down at him.

"You're such a stubborn fool," he muttered quietly, his fingers gently brushing through Goku's disheveled hair.

"But I guess that's one of the reasons I love you…" he added almost as an afterthought, the words slipping out before he could stop them. He felt a brief pang of surprise at himself for voicing it aloud, but he didn't try to take it back.

He shifted slightly, maneuvering Goku so he was lying more comfortably in his lap now, his head resting on his chest. He let out a quiet sigh, his hand gently caressing Goku's back, watching as his breathing became deep and regular, signaling that he had finally fallen asleep.

After a few minutes, Vegeta lifted him into his arms with surprising gentleness, before he flew through the air, carrying Goku in his arms with surprising gentleness. He made sure to support Goku's weight properly, his arms firmly around him.

As they approached their home, he quietly landed in front of the door, not wanting to wake Goku up with any loud noises. He fumbled with the door for a moment before opening it and carried him inside.

Once inside, he carefully made his way to their bedroom, laying Goku down gently on the bed. He took a moment to look at him, his chest rising and falling slowly with each deep breath.

Vegeta’s eyes softened with affection as he looked down at the sleeping Saiyan. He brushed a loose strand of hair away from his face, his touch tender.

Afterwards, he rummaged through the bag on the shelf, taking out a Senzu bean. He popped it into his mouth and chewed it up before leaning over Goku's unconscious form.

He gently parted Goku's lips and placed his mouth over his, feeding the chewed-up Senzu bean from his mouth to Goku's. He then pulled back ever so slightly, watching as Goku swallowed the mixture instinctively, the bean's restorative properties immediately working their magic.

Goku's weary face seemed to relax even more, his skin regaining some of its color. The exhaustion that had weighed him down slowly began to melt away as the bean's restorative powers repaired his body and reinvigorated him.

Once he was sure that the Senzu bean had done its job, Vegeta pulled back from him, sitting down on the edge of the bed. He let out a quiet sigh, still watching over him, his expression a mixture of fondness and concern.

It took a moment for Goku to come to.

"...Vegeta?" He winced a bit as he opened his eyes, processing his environment. “What happened? Did I lose?”

"Yeah, you could say that.” Vegeta chuckled. “You completely ran yourself ragged. You were so determined to keep fighting that you passed out in my arms.”

“Oh, whoops. I guess I got a little carried away… Sorry about that…” Goku laughed nervously.

Vegeta shook his head, a rare soft smile tugging at the corners of his lips. "You never know when to quit, do you?"

He continued to run his fingers through Goku's hair, his touch gentle but firm. "You always push yourself too hard and end up getting yourself into situations like this. You're going to get yourself killed one of these days, you know that?”

Goku pouted slightly, a sheepish smile on his face. "I know, I know, But I can't help it. I just want to get stronger, you know? Besides, if somebody like Atticas shows up again, then… I need to be able to protect you like you protected me…”

Vegeta's expression softened.

"Idiot, you don't have to do everything yourself," he muttered, his hand gently tracing along Goku's jawline. "I can handle myself, you know. I don't need you to always play the hero. We're partners,

remember? We're in this together.”

"Besides," he added, his voice becoming quieter, "you're not the only one who wants to get stronger. We'll keep pushing each other, alright? Just... don't overdo it like you did today. You don't want to end up passing out in my arms every time we train.”

"Well, you know, passing out in your arms isn't exactly the worst thing in the world.” He chuckled weakly, a mischievous glimmer in his eye. “It's actually quite comfortable. Plus the view isn't half bad either.”

Vegeta rolled his eyes, a small scoff escaping his lips. "You're hopeless," he muttered, shaking his head in mock annoyance, but there was no denying the slight blush that dusted his cheeks, secretly glad that Goku found comfort in his arms.

“But it’s true… Your chest is like a pillow." Goku made a show of nuzzling his face against Vegeta's chest, as if trying to prove his point.

Vegeta snorted, fighting to keep a straight face. "Oh, is that so?" he retorted, his voice tinged with both irritation and amusement.

He felt a mixture of annoyance and affection at Goku's clingy behavior, but he made no effort to push him away. Instead, he gently ran his fingers through Goku's hair again, a faint smile playing on his lips. "...You had better watch yourself, Kakarot. Keep talking like that, and I might start thinking you actually *like* being carried around."

“Ah, maybe.” Goku shifted in Vegeta's lap, snuggling closer. "But I can't help it… I feel safe with you. You're strong, and warm, and you smell nice too. Can't exactly blame a guy for enjoying a little bit of pampering every now and then..”

Vegeta felt his heart skip a beat at Goku’s words, but he quickly tried to hide his reaction. “Tch, you really are a clingy idiot,” he muttered. “I swear, you’re like a damn puppy sometimes.”

Despite his words, his hand continued to move over Goku’s back, his touch firm and reassuring. He may have acted annoyed by Goku's clingy behavior, but he secretly relished the feeling of having him close like this.

Goku was practically melting into Vegeta’s lap, his eyes half-closed with exhaustion, but his mind beginning to drift towards more intimate thoughts. He nuzzled his face against Vegeta’s chest, inhaling his scent and enjoying the feeling of being cradled in the smaller Saiyan’s lap.

He let out a small sigh, his voice tinged with fatigue and desire as he spoke. “Mmm… hey, Vegeta?”

Goku lifted his head slightly, his eyes locking with Vegeta's. "I'm feeling kinda yucky from our training. Could we go take a shower?”

A sly smirk tugged at the corners of Vegeta's mouth. "You just want me to wash your back, don't you?"

He was teasing, but there was no denying the underlying implication in his words.

Goku let out a tired laugh, his voice tinged with mock innocence. "Maaaaybe..."

He shifted in Vegeta's lap, looking up at him with a mock-sheepish expression. "And who knows, maybe I'll return the favor and wash yours too.”

Vegeta snorted, shaking his head at Goku's attempts to be coy. "Oh, so now you're being generous, huh?" he teased.

He shifted, carefully lifting Goku off of his lap. "Alright, come on then. Let's go get cleaned up. You really do stink.”

He rose to his feet, pulling Goku to his feet alongside him. He tried to maintain his usual gruff demeanor, but he couldn't help the hint of excitement in his voice.

After picking out some clothes that they could change into, he led Goku towards the bathroom, the anticipation of what was to come making his heart race just a bit faster.

Once they stepped into the bathroom, Vegeta turned on the water in the shower. He tested the temperature, making sure it was warm enough, before turning his attention back to Goku.

He stepped closer, his hand coming up to rest on Goku's hip. "Ready?" he asked, his voice dropping to a low, intimate tone.

“Yeah…” Goku’s cheeks burned as he began to take off his clothes, a mix of emotions making his movements slower than normal. He shyly removed his shirt, his hands trembling slightly as he did so.

Their love-making from the night before had somehow changed everything about this. Just knowing that they had taken a step in their relationship that there was no coming back from, because Vegeta had seen all of him, it made everything seem different somehow.

It wasn't like he regretted it, of course, but it was still a lot to process, the sense of control he had given up in order to take that leap, to give himself over to Vegeta fully.

Vegeta watched him with a hungry gaze, his own hands quickly and efficiently removing his own clothes. He wasn’t as shy as Goku, his confidence apparent in the way he stripped unabashedly.

Once they were both undressed, Goku stepped into the shower, the warm water immediately beginning to rinse away the sweat and dirt from their training. He let out a sigh of relief as the water cascaded over his body.

Vegeta followed after him, his eyes roving over his lover’s figure appreciatively.

"Tilt your head back, I'm going to wash your hair.” He moved his hands up to his lover's hair, gently beginning to work the shampoo into his scalp.

Vegeta's deep voice was filled with warmth as he gently started to massage shampoo into Goku's hair.

Goku obeyed, tilting his head back to give Vegeta better access. He closed his eyes, a soft moan escaping his lips as Vegeta's fingers massaged his scalp. “Mm... that feels nice."

The muscles in his shoulders and back relaxed under the skilled touch of Vegeta’s hands. He allowed himself to surrender to the sensation, his head tilting back further as the water continued to wash away the suds.

Vegeta continued to work the shampoo into Goku's hair, his touch gentle yet firm. He couldn’t help but let his eyes roam over Goku's exposed body, admiring the way the water droplets clung to his skin and made it glisten.

As he finished working the shampoo into Goku's hair, he started to rinse it out, his fingers running through the wet locks to make sure all of the soap was gone.

He found himself mesmerized by the sight of the water running down Goku's body, his eyes tracing the droplets as they cascaded over taut abs and powerful shoulders.

"Turn around, let me get your back," Vegeta commanded gently, his hands already reaching for the soap.

Goku obediently turned around, facing the shower spray, and leaned forward slightly to give Vegeta better access to his back. He braced himself against the wall, his muscles tensing just a bit in anticipation.

Vegeta squirted a bit of soap onto his hands and began to gently spread it across Goku's back. He started from his shoulders and slowly worked his way down, his hands gliding over the slick skin effortlessly.

He couldn't help but let his hands linger at the base of Goku's spine, his fingers tracing circles there before moving to the small of his back.

Vegeta continued to gently massage the soap onto Goku's back, his hands working in slow, circular motions. He took his time, making sure to cover every inch of his lover's skin, relishing the feeling of the slick flesh beneath his palms.

As he worked, he couldn't help but notice the way Goku's muscles relaxed under his touch. He could see the tension slowly leaving his body, replaced by a sense of calm and contentment.

But, as his hand moved around him and brushed across his tail scar, Goku's breath hitched and he turned around to hide his face against Vegeta's shoulder, clutching at his arm. "Mn…. Vegeta… Don't…"

Vegeta felt Goku's body tense up and he immediately knew what had happened. He wrapped his arms around Goku's waist, pulling him closer and holding him tight. “Sorry… I didn’t mean to hurt you.”

Instead of continuing to wash his back, he simply held him for a moment, letting the water wash over them both. He could feel Goku shaking slightly and he gently stroked his back, trying to soothe him.

“Are you alright?” he asked quietly, his words barely audible over the sound of the running water. He continued to hold him, waiting for a response. He could feel how tightly Goku was clinging to him, and he mentally chided himself for not being more careful.

"Mhm." Goku nodded shyly.

Vegeta could tell that Goku was a bit rattled by the unexpected touch. He kept holding him, his arms tight around his waist.

"I’ll be more careful next time," He promised, his voice hushed as his hand gently moved up and down Goku’s back. "But... it’s alright if I keep washing you, right? I just want to make sure you’re clean.”

"Y-Yeah..." Goku clung against him, slowly managing to calm himself down.

Vegeta continued to hold him as he reached for the soap again. He poured a liberal amount into his hands, and then began to work it over Goku's body, his touch gentle but firm.

He made sure to avoid Goku’s tail scar this time, carefully moving around it as he washed the rest of his body.

He took his time, his hands moving over Goku’s shoulders, arms, chest and stomach, his touch slow and deliberate. He could feel Goku still shaking slightly, but gradually, he could also feel him relaxing under his touch.

As Vegeta's hands brushed over his pecs, Goku whimpered slightly at the sensitivity of them. He knew Vegeta was just washing him, but he couldn't stop his ears from heating up in the process.

"You're soft." Vegeta murmured as he teased him.

"I'm what...?" Goku gasped slightly. He trembled at the pleasure of it all, trying not to show too much reaction.

"Soft... Like a cloud." Vegeta's voice was filled with appreciation as he cupped Goku's pec, teasing him slowly.

He continued to wash the rest of Goku’s body, his touch gentle yet firm. He could feel Goku relax under his hands again, his earlier sensitivity starting to ebb away.

But then his hand trailed over his stomach, and Goku giggled softly, arching his body in response to Vegeta's touch. “Vegeta, stop that…”

"Sorry, can't help it. You're just so damn adorable when you're all sensitive like this…" Vegeta teased, his hand still moving over Goku's stomach, deliberately tickling him again.

Goku let out a mix of a giggle and a gasp, his body arching and jerking away from Vegeta’s touch.

“Ah! Stop, stop! I told you I’m ticklish!” He protested, his voice still slightly unsteady from the combination of pleasure and irritation.

“Oh, I know. But you make such cute sounds when I do this.” Vegeta continued to tease him, his fingertips darting over Goku’s stomach and sides, enjoying the way his body would squirm and writhe beneath his touch.

He continued to tickle him, his hands moving over Goku’s soft spots with practiced ease. Goku let out another mix of a laugh and a moan, his body jerking and twisting, trying to escape the relentless onslaught.

“Please, Vegeta, mercy…!” Goku gasped out, his voice betraying his amusement even as he tried to move away. “I can’t… I can’t take much more of this…!”

“Alright, I’ll stop. For now, anyway,” Vegeta finally relented, his hands lifting away from Goku’s sensitive spots.

He returned to rubbing the soap over Goku's body, now focusing on areas that didn't make him squirm quite as much. But he couldn't quite resist one last tease, and his hand darted down to give Goku’s butt a quick pinch.

"Eep!" Goku yelped in response, his face turning bright red. "Vegeta...!”

Vegeta chuckled and pulled his hand back. "Sorry, couldn’t help myself, you’re just so cute when you’re all flustered and blushing like that.”

Goku pouted, his face still red.

“You’re so mean to me.” He knew he looked like an idiot, all flushed and flustered just from a few simple touches. It was embarrassing, but at the same time, he couldn’t help feeling a little thrill at how easily Vegeta could get him all worked up.

"Hey now, none of that," Vegeta teased. "I want to see all of you."

He reached out, gently pulling Goku's arms away from his chest. "Besides, it's only fair. Since you get to wash me, I get to wash you."

He handed Goku a bar of soap. "Your turn."

Goku blushed deeply at Vegeta's words, but took the soap regardless. He knew it was only fair, after all and he had offered it. But he couldn't help feeling a bit flustered at the prospect of having to wash Vegeta's body.

Trying not to let his nerves show, he took sometime to lather the shampoo into Vegeta's hair, gently, allowing him to rinse it out, before he hesitantly moved down out to touch Vegeta's chest, his touch soft as he began to spread the soap over his muscles.

As he worked, he couldn't help but admire the way Vegeta's body felt under his hands. The firm, powerful muscles, the smooth, tanned skin and the way they flexed and moved as he worked the soap into them.

He couldn't help but feel a sort of thrill at the feeling of touching Vegeta like this. It was so intimate, so different than usual. Admiring his scars, he moved his hands over Vegeta's shoulders and arms, cleaning every inch of the taut flesh beneath his fingers.

Vegeta was enjoying the feeling of Goku's hands on him, the way he touched him with such reverence and care. It was as though he was mapping out every inch of him, committing every contour of his body to memory.

He closed his eyes, relishing the sensation of Goku's touch and the feeling of the warm water cascaded over them both. "You're so gentle."

Goku smiled at the compliment, still focused on his task. He finished cleaning Vegeta's arms and then moved on to his stomach, his hands trailing over the ridges and valleys of his abs.

"Of course I am," he spoke quietly, his touch light and careful.

He took his time, making sure to wash every part of Vegeta's torso, his hands moving methodically across every inch of skin.

He couldn't help but relish the feeling of having this kind of access to Vegeta's body, to be able to explore him like this.

He moved his hands to Vegeta's back, carefully washing the broad planes of muscle there. He lingered over the small, circular scar where his tail used to be, his touch gentle and tender.

Vegeta felt a shiver run down his spine at the feel of Goku's fingers tracing over his tail scar. It wasn't a sensitive spot per se like it was for Goku, but it was a vulnerable one.

He remained still, letting Goku touch him there, his eyes closed and his breath coming in soft pants.

Goku was careful, his touches soft and light. He could feel how tense Vegeta was under his hands. He continued to wash him, making sure to be extra gentle there as he cleaned the area around the tail scar.

Once he was finished washing Vegeta's back, Goku moved back around to his front. He began to soap up his legs, working his way down from his thighs to his calves.

He had to kneel down to reach the lower parts of Vegeta's legs, which put him right level with his groin. He tried not to let his eyes linger there, suddenly feeling awkward with the whole situation.

But he could feel Vegeta's eyes on him, watching him intently. He pretended not to notice, focusing on washing Vegeta's legs, his hands moving over every inch of skin from his knees down to his feet.

"You're awfully quiet," Vegeta commented, his voice low and sultry. His hands moved to rest on top of Goku's head, his fingers tangling in his wet hair.

"Just trying to concentrate…" Goku mumbled, his voice a little shaky. He was aware of how close he was to Vegeta's crotch and was trying very hard not to think about it.

He quickly finished washing one leg and moved on to the next, his hands moving a little bit quicker than before.

Vegeta could tell he was getting flustered, his movements a bit jerkier than usual.

He continued to thread his fingers through Goku's hair, enjoying the way he flinched every time he moved even the tiniest bit.

Once Goku finished washing his other leg, he quickly stood up, trying to put some distance between them. He knew he was blushing, his cheeks feeling hot and his heart racing.

"All done…" he muttered, avoiding eye contact with Vegeta.

Vegeta smirked, noticing how flustered Goku was. "Are you sure about that?" he asked, his voice dripping with false innocence.

He stepped closer to Goku, cornering him against the wall and leaning in closer to his ear. "You seem to have forgotten something…"

Goku swallowed hard, his heart racing faster now that he was trapped between the wall and Vegeta's body. "Ah, H-Have I…?" he asked, his voice barely more than a whisper.

"Mhm. You've missed a spot," Vegeta's lips brushed against the shell of Goku's ear. "And it's a very important spot, too."

Goku shivered at the feel of Vegeta's breath against his ear, his body responding to the closeness of his naked form. "W-Where…?" he asked, his voice cracking slightly.

Vegeta leaned in even closer, his body pressed flush against Goku's.

“You know where…” he whispered in his ear, his hands slowly trailing down Goku’s sides until they rested on his hips.

Goku’s breath hitched as he felt Vegeta’s hands on his hips, his eyes fluttering shut at the sensation. “Vegeta…”

“Yes…?” Vegeta asked, his tone dripping with false innocence. He moved his lips down to Goku’s neck, his tongue darting out to tease the sensitive skin there. “Still need a hint?”

Goku's eyes fluttered shut again as Vegeta's lips teased his neck, his breath escaping in a soft gasp. He could feel his body responding to Vegeta's touch, a warm, needy sensation building in his core.

But he wasn't quite willing to give in just yet.

"N-No... I think I got it..." he mumbled, his voice hoarse.

Vegeta pulled away slightly, letting his hands glide up and down Goku's sides.

"Really?" His fingers traced idle patterns on his skin. He leaned in again, his lips hovering just above Goku's, close enough that he could feel his breath, but not quite touching. "I can give you a hint if you want.”

Goku's own breath hitched at the closeness of Vegeta's mouth, his body yearning to feel it against his. But he held back, stubbornly refusing to give in.

"No hints..." he breathed, his hands coming up to grip Vegeta's shoulders. "I can figure it out on my own.”

"Yeah?” Vegeta asked, his fingers gently digging into Goku's hips.

He leaned forward a bit more, his body pressing even closer to Goku's. "You seem pretty... distracted right now, though.”

Goku's breath came in sharp gasps as Vegeta pressed himself against him, his body feeling hot and needy. He struggled to keep his wits about him, his mind a foggy blur of desire and frustration.

"I'm... I'm fine..." he managed to say, his voice a bit strained.

Vegeta smirked at Goku's stubborn determination. He could see the way his body was responding to him, the way he was fighting the urge to give in. It only made him want to tease him even more. “Mmm… You're shaking…”

Goku let out a low moan at the sensation of Vegeta's teeth on his skin, his body arching against his. He could feel his resistance slipping, his willpower weakening under the onslaught of Vegeta's touch.

"Vegeta... Please..." he panted, his hands clenching on Vegeta's shoulders. "Don't tease me anymore… It's too much…”

"Too much, huh? I wonder what else I could do that would make it even worse for you.” Vegeta his hands moving down to grip his hips again, his lips trailing across to his chest.

He took his time, allowing his tongue to dart out to taste his skin as he went. His hands continued to grip Goku's hips, holding him in place and preventing him from escaping.

Goku's breath caught in his throat as Vegeta's lips and tongue continued to explore his chest, his body quivering with need. The heat in his core was growing stronger, his resolve weakening with every moment.

"Vegeta... Don't... I can't... take much more of this..." he gasped out, his fingers digging into Vegeta's back.

Vegeta was enjoying the way he was coming apart under his touch, but he knew he needed to slow things down before they went too far.

He finally pulled back, reluctantly lifting his lips from Goku's skin. "Alright, alright, I'll stop tormenting you for now."

Goku let out a shaky breath, his body relaxing a bit as the onslaught of sensations stopped. He tried to regain control of himself, but his legs were still trembling and his heart was racing.

He took a few deep breaths, his chest heaving as he tried to calm himself down. After a moment, he finally managed to speak, his voice still a bit shaky. "You... really like... torturing me, don't you...?"

Vegeta chuckled at Goku's weak attempt at sass, his hands holding onto his hips. "Can you blame me? You make such cute noises when you're all flustered and desperate."

Goku let out an embarrassed huff, trying to glare at Vegeta, but failing miserably due to his current state.

"You're... evil," he muttered, his body still pressed against the wall, his legs feeling like jelly.

Enjoying Goku's weak attempts to be sassy, Vegeta moved closer, his body trapping Goku between it and the wall.

"Mmm, maybe. Or maybe I just like seeing you all riled up and needy," he murmured, his hands roaming over Goku's sides.

Goku's breath caught in his throat as their bodies pressed completely against each other. He could feel the heat radiating off of him, the way his muscles felt under his hands.

He tried to muster up some kind of witty retort, but all he could manage was a weak, "W-Weren't you... going to stop tormenting me...?"

Vegeta smirked at Goku's question, his hands still roaming over his body. "I was, but you just look so damn cute right now, I can't help myself."

He finally pulled back, reluctantly taking his hands off Goku's hips. "But you're right, we should probably get dressed before we get carried away.”

Goku let out a shaky breath, his body feeling oddly bereft without Vegeta's touch. He stumbled away from the wall, his legs still a bit unsteady, and grabbed a towel to dry off.

"Good... idea..." he mumbled, not trusting himself to say much at the moment.

Vegeta took a towel for himself, quickly drying himself off. He watched as Goku fumbled with the towel, his hands still shaking a bit.

He couldn't help but tease him a bit more. "You alright there, Kakarot? You look a little flustered.”

Goku shot him a weak glare, his cheeks still flushed. "Shut up," he muttered, wrapping the towel around his waist. "It's your fault, anyway.

"My fault?” Vegeta’s lips curved upwards. “I don't think you were complaining a few minutes ago.”

"You're such a jerk, you know that?” Goku huffed in annoyance, pulling on some boxers and a tank top.

Vegeta smirked, amused by Goku's grumpy demeanor. "And yet, you still love me," he retorted, slipping into a pair of shorts.

Goku rolled his eyes, but he couldn't deny the truth in Vegeta's words.

"Unfortunately…" he muttered, pulling on a pair of sweatpants.

Vegeta stepped closer, wrapping his arms around Goku's waist from behind.

"Oh, come on... Don't be like that..." His lips found the back of Goku's neck again. This time there was no teasing or tormenting, only a quiet tenderness that he craved.

Vegeta sighed against Goku's neck, his lips gently kissing the sensitive skin there. He held him close, his arms wrapped around his waist. "I may be a jerk sometimes, but I do love you. More than anything."

Goku's heart skipped a beat at Vegeta's words, his body relaxing into his embrace. He leaned back against him, his eyes fluttering shut as he basked in the warmth and comfort of his touch, his own arms coming up to rest on top of Vegeta's.

"I know," His voice was soft and vulnerable. "I love you, too. More than you know."

"Good," Vegeta mumbled against his skin. "Because I can't imagine my life without you. I don't want to."

Goku's heart ached at the raw honesty in Vegeta's voice. He turned around in his arms, his own hands coming up to cup his face.

"You don't have to," His eyes locked onto Vegeta's. "I'm not going anywhere. I'm right here, and I always will be."

Vegeta's eyes softened at Goku's words, a rare tenderness filling him. He leaned into Goku's touch, his hands moving to grip his hips tightly.

"Promise me," he murmured, his voice shaky. "Promise me you'll never leave. No matter what."

Goku's thumbs grazed over Vegeta's cheeks, his eyes filled with a fierce determination. "I promise, I won't ever leave you. I'll always be here. You're stuck with me forever, whether you like it or not."

Vegeta huffed a soft chuckle, pulling him even closer. "I think I can live with that."

Goku smiled, his heart swelling with love and affection for the man in his arms. He wrapped his arms around Vegeta's neck, pulling him into a soft, gentle kiss.

"Good," he whispered against his lips. "Because, to be honest, I don't think I could live without you, either.”

Vegeta kissed him back, his arms holding him close. It wasn't their usual scorching, passionate kisses. This was tender, and gentle, full of an unspoken deeper emotion that they both knew they shared.

When they finally pulled apart, Vegeta rested his forehead against Goku's, their breaths mingling together.

Goku's eyes were half-lidded, his body still thrumming with a mix of leftover lust and the warmth and comfort of Vegeta's touch.

"You know," His voice was a bit raspy. "We should really get some sleep…”

Vegeta let out a low sigh, his arms still wrapped around Goku's waist, resting his face against Goku's chest. "Mmm... Probably.”

Goku brought his hands up to play with Vegeta's hair, running his fingers through it in a soothing motion.

"Come on, let's go to bed," he practically whispered, his body starting to feel heavy with fatigue.

Vegeta leaned into Goku's touch, letting out a low, content sigh. "Mmph... Fine..."

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“It's too cooold!” Once Goku and Vegeta returned to their bedroom, Goku was shivering, quick to hop into the bed under the covers in desperate need of warmth.

Vegeta grabbed Goku's medication with a sigh, walking back over to the lump of quilt. “Kakarot, I have your medication.”

Goku reached out a hand from under the blanket.

Vegeta glanced at it with some amusement, handing it to him.

Goku took it, quickly retracting his hand. After taking the pill, he chewed on the melatonin gummies, savoring the flavor.

Vegeta then got into the bed next to him with a small smirk. Without any warning, he pulled that lump over next to him.

“H-Hey…!” Goku stammered, but couldn't complain because Vegeta’s arms, even outside of the quilt, were warm. “Jerk…”

After a moment, Goku became quiet again, until Vegeta's phone suddenly rang.

Goku peeked his head out and grabbed it, since it was actually closer to him than it was to Vegeta. “It's Bulma. Should I answer it?”

“No, don't. Not now.” Vegeta took it from him.

“What? Why?” Goku inquired.

“I already know she has questions… About that bastard Atticus…” Vegeta moved over closer, burying his head against the nape of Goku's neck. “I'm not ready to talk about it yet… I can't…”

“I understand… But you know she's probably gonna come after you eventually, though, right?”

“Yeah, I know…” Vegeta’s lip curved upwards, kissing his jawline. “By the way, it's rather rude to hog the entire blanket, don't you think…?”

“Sorry… Here…” Goku whispered, opening back up as a blanket for him to crawl up under and share.

Vegeta, of course, took the opportunity to wrap an arm around Goku's waist, with a small smirk.

Goku secretly liked it when Vegeta decided to be the big spoon, so he wasn't complaining.

Vegeta held him close, whispering into his ear. “By the way… I was thinking… Maybe you should go see him, after all… The old man… I think it'd be good for you…”

“A-ah… Yeah, maybe…” Goku was somewhat taken aback by the subject change.

Vegeta blushed lightly in frustration. “I know you feel ashamed of what happened… But none of them are judging you. You can't live your whole life in fear because of what that man did to you.”

Goku looked away when he heard that. “I know that… It's just… I haven't seen Master Roshi for several years now.”

“So?” Vegeta raised an eyebrow.

“...You… You wouldn't get it…” Goku was quiet for a moment. He couldn't say that the longer he was away from somebody the harder it made it to go and see them, especially when he had mostly been avoiding people.

“Look, I'll think about it, alright…? So you guys won't keep worrying about me.”

“I’m not trying to bug you, but they're right to worry, you know… You shouldn't isolate yourself so much… You have a lot of people who care about you. And as much as I like having you to myself

all the time, I feel the same way…" Vegeta felt his heart pounding harder when he saw Goku's ears turn red.

"I'd like to go out more too, but… It's too much right now. I feel safer when I'm home with you…" Goku admitted with some embarrassment. "Besides… After everything that happened with Atticus, I… I feel like I should be doing more for you…"

"What? Kakarot, no… Listen to me. Focus on yourself... I can handle my own problems…" Vegeta insisted. "Atticus is gone. He's not coming back."

Truthfully, the words felt empty, some part of Vegeta wondered if that was really true or not. But it's what he had to tell himself every day.

Despite how often he saw that disgusting face in his dreams or heard his voice echoing in the back of his head, or even the lingering feeling of those cursed hands, constantly roaming his body-

"I'm sorry… I just… I feel bad… For not doing more for you when all that was going on…" Goku whispered. "I was scared… But if I had known that he was-"

"Hush…" Vegeta planted his lips against the nape of his neck and then behind his ear. "You didn't do anything wrong."

"...I keep thinking about my grandpa, how he died… I've lost the people I care about so many times I've lost count…" Goku trailed off and leaned into Vegeta's touch, sighing shakily. "And Atticus… He hurt you… yet I couldn't protect you. It just felt like… like maybe I deserved to suffer, after everything he did to you."

"No,..." Vegeta shook his head. "No, that wasn't your fault. What Atticus did to me, I don't want you blaming yourself for it."

"How can you say that? All that time, you were suffering and I wasn't even *aware* of it." A fresh wave of tears spilled over as Goku's shoulders shook with sobs.

"Exactly, you weren't aware." Vegeta repeated his words in an attempt to comfort him. "There's no way you could have been, because I lied to you..."

Goku turned around, clinging to Vegeta's arms, tears streaming down his cheeks as he buried his face into Vegeta's chest, allowing himself to be embraced. "I know that... But I should have been... I feel like I failed you."

Vegeta planted a kiss to the top of his head, holding him tightly and gently stroking his hair. "You could never fail me, Kakarot. *Never*... just having you by my side was enough for me… to keep me going…"

“...I love you…” Goku turned around and nuzzling up against his neck.

“I love you too…” Vegeta tiredly ran his fingers through Goku's hair, barely aware of what he was even saying or doing anymore.

“My grandpa… He used to hold me like this sometimes.” Goku said with a fond expression on his face, completely changing the subject.

“You've told me that before…” Vegeta noted.

“Have I? Hm… Guess I forgot…” Goku pondered it. He smiled softly, a hint of comfort washing over him. "It feels nice. Being held like this by someone who cares about you… It's warm…”

“Well.” Vegeta smirked, interlacing his fingers through some of Goku's hair. “While I’d usually prefer not to be compared to an old man, I know how important he was to you, so I guess I don't mind it that much… Just try not to make a habit of it.”

Goku smiled. Before closing his eyes and resting once more against Vegeta's chest. “I won't.”

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A/N: Hope somebody enjoyed that. I'll try to post more when I can. Chapters will probably be shorter for a while. And hopefully updates will be pretty frequent from this point, at least for a while. I have an overall idea of a draft written, and will just be posting portions of the final over time as I finish them.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!